

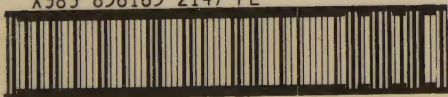
BLACK MAN'S ROCK



JOHN MACKIE

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BLACK MAN'S ROCK



RICHARD TOD

THE IRISHMAN WAS READY FOR HIM

BLACK MAN'S ROCK

A STORY OF
THE BASUTO WAR
(1879-81)

BY

JOHN MACKIE

AUTHOR OF "THE HEART OF THE PRAIRIE," "HIDDEN IN CANADIAN WILDS,"
"IN SEARCH OF SMITH," "THE RISING OF THE RED MAN," "THE LIFE
ADVENTUROUS," "THE TREASURE HUNTERS," ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE

By far and away the most interesting and fascinating boys' stories are those that are founded on fact. I might go further and say, the only abiding ones. And well for those who are to be the future rulers of this Empire that it is so. They will have less to unlearn. I venture to affirm that many of the failures of life are directly traceable to the rotten so-called boys' literature absorbed in the receptive days of youth—the after career having been handicapped by false and misleading impressions of life and things. I have had ample opportunities of verifying the truth of this in many widely differing parts of the world.

The youth of this country is in danger of forgetting how we came to form this great Empire of ours—the greatest the world has ever seen—and how only by the expenditure of precious lives, the devoted lives of our heroic pioneers, has it been held together and handed down to us.

Of course we have all made mistakes—mistakes that we would do well to bear in mind lest we should be tempted to repeat them.

This story with all its tragedy and its laughter is really a bit of history. Had I drawn from my imagination only I could not have produced anything half so interesting.

So, “*Lest we forget!*”

JOHN MACKIE.

LONDON, 1911.

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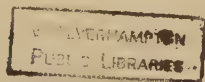
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CHAPTER I

THE SPARK OF REBELLION

MR. AUSTIN, the British resident magistrate stationed with Morosi, a Basuto chief, was having a bad time. Basutoland just then was under the protection of the Cape or British Government, and the latter had decreed that the former must pay a hut-tax, which it was one of Mr. Austin's duties to collect. This task was neither a particularly light nor pleasant one, for Basutoland physically is a species of glorified Switzerland, and by no means easy to get about in. Moreover, as the Basutos in the past had on more than one occasion administered a set-back to the English in fair fight—in 1852 particularly—it was only the thought of the superior numbers and prestige of the British that kept them from rising openly in revolt. There was another matter however, at times,

A



they were strangely enough inclined to lose sight of. Britain had promised them protection from their enemies. The black Napoleon, Tshaka the Zulu, who had been the scourge and terror of South Africa, was dead, but there were others to whom he had handed down his potent system. One fine morning this unsatisfactory state of affairs was brought home forcibly to the resident magistrate. Mr. Austin had met Dodo, a son of Morosi, the chief, and in response to the magistrate's greeting the haughty young warrior had given him a contemptuous nod. The Englishman was by no means a touchy man, but he resented the black man's slight.

"What's the matter with you, Dodo?" asked the magistrate, stopping short and turning towards him. "I've noticed something has been on your mind lately."

"This hut-tax," replied Dodo sulkily. "I don't see why we should keep on paying it to your Government. I think it is time the Basutos stopped such payment."

"You are only the son of your father Morosi, who is the chief," replied Mr. Austin; "I don't exactly see why I should be called upon to discuss such matters with you. But, to save

you from getting into trouble, I am willing to talk over things with you. Now, tell me, what would happen to your people if Britain did not undertake to protect you ? ”

“ I suppose we’d have to fight the Zulus whom Tshaka trained,” replied Dodo, with a not very successful attempt to dispose of the matter in an offhand way. The terrible Zulu mentioned had carried ruin and death into the neighbouring country, and because he had stopped short at the very doorway of his land, Dodo, with others of his ilk, was inclined to leave him out of his calculations altogether.

“ You fight the Zulus !—A handful of Baphutis fight the impis whom the great Tshaka trained ! If you don’t know better than that, you ought to, Dodo.” Mr. Austin felt inclined to pity this bumptious young warrior.

“ Well, if you think those enemies you speak about would find it so easy to beat us, why don’t they come and try ? ” asked Dodo lamely.

“ Yes, ask yourself that, and if you answer truly you’ll say it is because you are under British protection. But it isn’t the Zulus alone you’d have to fear if you weren’t under our care. What about the Boers ? I fancy they’ve

taken a good slice of land from you already. There's that bit in particular where Wepener and Jammersberg Drift is now, and which goes under the name of the Conquered Territory. What if the Boers took it into their heads to have more land ? ”

“ They can't come into these mountains,” was the boastful reply. “ We'd be at them on all sides. If it comes to that, it's a long time since we had a good fight, and warriors can't remain warriors without fighting. We're tired of farming and being shepherded like old women. And, as I've said, we're tired of that hut-tax.”

“ That is really a small matter, and it performs a great service to your people, Dodo,” explained the Resident, still keeping himself well in hand, and ignoring the hint of menace in the young warrior's speech. “ The hut-tax goes to defray expenses of government administration in your country. The money, and more, is spent in securing law and order for you as well as protection from outsiders. You are ungrateful to talk like that.”

“ It seems to me, O wise one, that when the British interfere with other races, believing or pretending they have been sent by the Great

Spirit to do so, they generally end in making much trouble, and spilling no end of blood. Of course, we don't mind that, but it seems strange that your people, who are always saying that all you want is to teach peaceful ways, are ever ready to fight. Indeed, I really believe you like it."

"Dodo, I object to your manner and form of address. We white men will at least take no insults from such as you. Your country would be swimming in blood now if it were not for the British keeping those others back. We only want to defray the expenses of the work that keeps your people prosperous and free from intrusion by others. You are ungrateful and a lover of dissension—a stirrer-up of discontent. You go openly about putting bad thoughts into the minds of the people against those who are really their friends. I do not want trouble, but I warn you my Government will not stand such interference much longer. There are a good many taxes unpaid. If I think there are any who really cannot pay them, I will leave them alone, but if I think there are those who can pay them, and won't, I shall certainly put them into prison until they do. Now, take my advice

and don't interfere. If you do, as sure as I stand here, you shall regret it bitterly. Good-day ! ” And Mr. Austin walked off.

He had not gone a hundred yards before he met Dodo's brothers, Letuka and Masepuli. It was perhaps no coincidence that much the same conversation took place between the three. It was obvious to the magistrate that an organised attack was being made upon his authority. There were several well-to-do Baphutis who had that morning refused to pay the hut-tax, and if he shirked his duty in making them pay it now, his usefulness would be at an end, and the British might as well relinquish their protectorate. This, of course, must not happen. He must assert his authority at any cost. Somewhat perturbed he returned to the Residency.

Silver Spruit was a charming place. The commodious and neat stone house with the raised verandah, or stoep as it is called in South Africa, running all round it, stood in the centre of a well-kept ground, with the greenest of lawns and the choicest of flowers and fruit trees. Mr. Austin in those South African Highlands had made himself a home that would

have done credit to an English countryside. Still he had not created it at the expense of these black people whom he lived amongst. He subordinated his life to advancing their interests. All around were the neat conical mud and stone huts of the Baphutis, with here and there well-cultivated gardens and square, tilled fields of millet, corn, and gourds. Situated near a large dam that might well have been called a lake, were a number of European houses which were used as smithies, carpenters' shops and stores of various kinds. Standing by themselves in a tree-fringed square were a court-house and a guard-room. Everywhere there were well-laid-out paths, shaded by trees, and signs of up-to-date progress and prosperity. And hemming all in on three sides, and at a distance of a few miles, were the heavenward-soaring peaks of the mountains of Basutoland, the mighty Drakensberg Range.

When Mr. Austin reached the Residency he found his two nephews, who were cousins to each other, Jack and Percy Scott, who assisted him in his work, busy in the office. Their ages were eighteen and sixteen respectively. They were both smart, well-set-up young fellows for

their years. They had been to good schools in Capetown, and were typical colonial lads, loving perhaps the outdoor life and all that pertained to it better than the office work in which they were just then engaged. They differed considerably in temperament, the elder being brave and practical, if somewhat impulsive at times, while Percy, the younger one, though not lacking in courage, was inclined to look well ahead and weigh contingencies. They got on together famously, each seeing in the other qualities he knew he himself lacked and admired in another.

"Boys," said the magistrate as he entered the large business-like room where they sat at their desks, "I want to talk seriously to you for a few minutes. I had hoped that the necessity for doing so would not have arisen, but I'm afraid there is trouble brewing for all of us. I'd like you to understand how things are going, so as to be prepared for contingencies. But, perhaps, I ought to send you south; I'm afraid Basutoland will be no place for you unless the Government takes prompt measures."

"If there's going to be trouble, sir, and per-

haps fighting, I hope you won't think of leaving me out of it," said Jack Scott. "Besides, I've been drilled at Capetown, and am quite old enough to be a volunteer."

"And I know the country and the language, and would be of use as a guide or interpreter if there was trouble," chimed in Percy.

"Yes, that's all very well, but I'm responsible to your parents for your safety, and it would be a bigger risk than I'd care to take," observed the magistrate. "Those sons of Morosi have been allowed to go too far, and have done a lot of mischief. I must put a check on them now. As you might be useful as witnesses in the preliminary stages of this business, you can put down your pens for the present. I'm going to insist on some hut-taxes that have been long owing. Come with me, I blame myself for letting them remain unpaid so long. Get your hats."

"Shall we take our side-arms, sir?" asked Jack Scott.

"Certainly not. We'll go as we always have done, unarmed. If the defaulters don't respond, then we'll have to imprison them until the tax

is paid. That is the penalty, as they well know. Of course, that will be for the Black Police to do—not you.”

Jack felt that he had earned the snub, and said nothing further. The two lads left their desks and accompanied Mr. Austin.

It was obvious as they passed through the Basuto village or town that, if the black people were in a rebellious mood, their animus was not directed against them personally. It was the Government they represented that the black people had grown tired of. Enforced peace was not altogether congenial to a race that had been accustomed to indulging in little fights at intervals for centuries. To some of the younger men and warriors particularly, the present peaceful and uneventful condition of things, even if allied with unprecedented prosperity, had become decidedly monotonous. They were going to set aside their personal liking to Mr. Austin, in order to have a row. If only their numbers were sufficient, they would have even liked to try conclusions with the Zulus themselves. But that they knew was beyond them. The British were the people

who took most hard knocks, and who would not be so likely to press home revenge if by any chance they happened to beat them. They had fought the red-coats before, and on one or two occasions actually beaten them. Besides, if they should happen to be defeated by the British, the latter would speedily put them in the position of victors, by granting them concessions so numerous and liberal that they would practically amount to rewards. Yes, it paid to be beaten by the British.

It was perhaps unfortunate that at the first hut they called a meeting of the malcontents, presided over by Dodo, was in progress. They came out of the hut, and confronted the magistrate and his two assistants. Dodo had a wicked look on his face, and had evidently been stirring up the others to resist the authority of Mr. Austin. But the latter had made up his mind to insist on the hut-tax, at the same time avoiding anything that might tend to grate on their prejudices and annoy them. Mr. Austin in a few quiet, firm words, for he had already made the situation sufficiently clear to them, called on Dodo to comply with the regulations. He

also named and called on some of the others to do the same.

“Go back where you come from, O man of soft words and unjust ways,” said Dodo. “The time has come when the Baphutis can stand on their own legs without any help from you or your masters. None of us here have any intention of paying further hut-tax. Go home if you value your skins.”

“Dodo, you are saying what you will be sorry for, but I am willing to overlook your hot words this time, and to give you one more chance. Will you, and those whom I have named, pay that hut-tax? Do not answer foolishly. Look, we have come as friends and unarmed, and remember we represent the British Government that has long befriended you. We have stood between you and others I need not name. I have spoken to Morosi, your father, who is the chief, but he has done nothing in the matter. You have put me off on other occasions. I know you have much more than the small sum of money I ask you to pay. I will give you three hours in which to pay it.”

“Go your way, O wise one, for none

of us here have the slightest intention of paying."

"Dodo, you are my prisoner, you will come with me," said Mr. Austin, and made a step towards him.

But Dodo laughed in the magistrate's face, and the others closed about him.

CHAPTER II

THE FLIGHT FROM SILVER SPRUIT

AND now the spark of insubordination and open rebellion had broken out into flame, and the time had come for Mr. Austin to assert his authority by force. Doubtless he realised that he was not a little to blame in that he had not been sufficiently firm with those fractious ones who had been spoiling for trouble. Anyhow, he must act, and that quickly, otherwise he and the authority he represented had better make haste and clear out of Basutoland.

"Jack," said Mr. Austin, "go and tell Mr. Casey to come up with the Black Police. I think you'll find them waiting and ready. Percy and I will stop here."

It was odd that none of the malcontents interfered with the youth as he started off. He had not to go far. Casey, the white officer, had suspected trouble, and Jack had hardly reached the barracks before the twenty-four

police, headed by Casey, were on their way to the scene.

“If I had only Irishmen wid me instead of these haythen,” observed Casey regretfully, “I’d give them dhivels something they wouldn’t forgit in a hurry. But ye can’t be sure of black men when it’s their own kith and kin they have to fight.”

Though Casey had his black troopers well in hand, his words proved true. When they came up to the hut where Dodo with his friends maintained a defiant attitude towards the magistrate and Percy, they did not seem to like the situation. They had not been allowed to take their fire-arms with them, as that would only have given the Basutos an excuse to begin a wholesale massacre. They were expected to carry out their orders unarmed.

“There are the men you have to arrest,” cried the magistrate, pointing to certain individuals and naming them.

Next moment Casey himself was setting his troopers an example. A burly warrior, who had been shouting some insulting remarks, seeing the officer making for him, produced a club, and aimed a furious blow at his assailant’s head.

Before he could deliver it the lithe Irishman had rushed in and butted him, with the result that the sorely astonished native was doubled up and collapsed. Casey had known it was useless trying to make any impression on a native's head with his fists.

Next moment there was a scene of indescribable confusion. There could be little doubt that some of the troopers were only half-hearted in their efforts to secure prisoners, and that they ought to have done better than they did. Had it not been for Casey, it is fairly certain very few prisoners would have been secured at all. The Irishman, who loved a fight above all things, used his fists to such excellent effect that his troopers had little else to do than to secure the men he put *hors de combat*. Casey seeing one of his troopers deliberately letting a man go whom he himself had been mainly instrumental in securing, promptly turned and knocked down the turn-coat. This doubtless had a deterrent effect upon the others.

As for Mr. Austin, he realised that it would militate against his dignity and authority as a magistrate to personally take part in the struggle, so he confined himself to pointing out the ring-

leaders and defaulters to those whose duty it was to execute his orders. A large crowd of natives, all visibly excited, was now collecting, and it was evident that considerable ill-feeling had been stirred up. It was at this point that the magistrate caught sight of Dodo haranguing the Baphutis, and urging them on to attack and release the prisoners. It was necessary that he should be taught a lesson. Mr. Austin pointed him out to Casey, and the black man saw him do it. Skilfully dodging the police he rushed in upon the magistrate, but Jack had observed his action. Suddenly putting out his foot he tripped Dodo up, with the result that Dodo shot head first into a stout old warrior who was making up for lack of agility by strength of lung, and bowled that gentleman over in a manner that left nothing to be desired. Before the lads could secure Dodo, however, the chief's son was closed in upon by the now threatening crowd, and that was the last they saw of him just then.

“ Mr. Casey, march your prisoners to the jail,” cried Mr. Austin, who all through the rough-and-tumble struggle had preserved a comparatively unmoved demeanour. “ Stand back, Baphutis,

I order you to stand back," he cried. "How dare you resist the authority of the Queen!"

Whether it was his words, or the effect of the prompt action of the little force in the face of such desperate odds, that held the Baphutis in check, it is hard to say. This was certain, the angry crowd allowed Casey and his men to pass comparatively unmolested through their midst with their prisoners. It was significant, however, that some of the troopers had allowed the ringleaders to escape, and none of them had ventured to put a hand on Dodo when it would have been comparatively easy for them to do so. They evidently were disinclined to interfere with a son of their chief, Morosi.

Casey led the way to the jail, holding a powerful-looking and truculent Baphuti by the wrist. The stooping and powerless position of the latter would have been ludicrous under other circumstances. It was evident Mr. Casey had practised Ju-jitsu to some effect. The magistrate and the boys brought up the rear, and kept the angry crowd in check. The situation was a critical one. Had the white men shown the slightest apprehension or wavered in their

action, it is tolerably certain the party would have been rushed, and in all probability wiped out altogether. As it was, they passed into the jail, and Mr. Austin and the boys remained outside facing the now huge crowd of Baphutis when the iron-plated doors were again closed. It said something for the moral courage of the magistrate and his men that they had performed their difficult duty without a resort to fire-arms. Had a shot been fired it would have been the signal for a general massacre. To preserve an unperturbed demeanour was their greatest safeguard just then.

Mr. Austin and the lads passed through the menacing, angry crowd of Baphutis, and returned to the Residency.

“Boys,” said the magistrate, “the Government must be informed of this at once. I know these black people well. They are as tractable as children when things are going smoothly, but when once roused they become fiends, and will turn against their best friends. I feel certain that they’ll attempt to rescue the prisoners. We must send at once to Rouxville, where there is a camp of the Cape Mounted Rifles. It’s a thirty-mile ride. Jack, will you take a message? It

might be as well, however, not to start until dark. Otherwise they might follow and stop you."

"I'll be all right on the roan, sir, and I know the road well. It will be better, as you say, not to start until dark. I'll be at Rouxville before daybreak to-morrow." The prospect of that midnight ride had powerful attractions for the adventurous youth.

"Well, that's settled. I'll write a letter to the officer commanding the C.M.R. now, and another to the Government, telling them how matters stand, and what I have done. It won't be the first despatch they've had from me on the subject. Now, both of you get things put straight in the office. Put all important papers into the strong box, and we'll have it removed to a place of safety to-night. See to your fire-arms and ammunition, though I hope we shan't require to use them. And don't show yourself to the crowd outside more than you can help."

A few hours later, when it grew dark, Jack saddled up and started on his long and lonely ride to apprise the Cape Mounted Rifles of their critical position. Mr. Austin, with Percy and such native servants as still remained faithful,

secured such papers as were of importance and prepared for eventualities. There was now hardly a sound to be heard in the native town. The white people knew a great meeting was being held, and some line of action was being determined on.

“ I hate being thought a croaker,” observed Mr. Austin, “ but I’m certain there is trouble brewing. This is the calm before the storm. You’d better be prepared to clear out of this, Percy, at any moment.”

Mr. Austin’s words proved true. They had hardly lain down in their clothes at midnight to snatch a few hours’ rest when a great uproar in the immediate vicinity of the jail was heard. Mr. Austin and Percy ran out on to the stoep, and, to their consternation, saw what appeared to be the entire population of the village surrounding it. Many of the natives held lighted torches aloft so that what was going on could be distinctly seen. The Baphutis all seemed armed. As Mr. Austin and Percy prepared to go over and join Casey and his troopers, they were met by a messenger from the latter asking for instructions. “ If they rush the jail, shall I fire on them ? ” asked Casey.

But Mr. Austin knew only too well that that would mean the inevitable massacre of every white man and woman in the village, and told him to make back to barracks with his men and leave the care of the jail and the prisoners to its usual custodians. Twenty-five men—and by far the greatest number of them Baphutis—were powerless pitted against thousands. The Government would only call him a Quixotic fool and hold him responsible for the lives of all Europeans if he failed to avail himself of the chances of escape offered. To resist would indeed be the height of folly. Mr. Austin and Casey knew that only for a number of Baphutis in the crowd, who were personally friendly to them, they would not then have been alive.

As Mr. Austin prepared to follow up the messenger and see Casey personally, he was met by half-a-dozen or so friendly tribesmen. An old man, who constituted himself spokesman, said—

“Master, you will come with us. You must leave this place at once. Casey, the Police Officer, has but six men left to him, the others have refused to aid him. He will be allowed to leave the village. Come quickly and quietly,

otherwise every one of you will be instantly killed. Listen—they are destroying the jail now.”

It was as the old man said. The black men had begun their work of rescuing the prisoners. With a huge beam used as a battering ram, they had broken in the door of the outside gate of the prison, and were now liberating those whom it contained. There was a loud Babel of excited, angry voices.

“I must see Casey,” cried Mr. Austin. “I’m not going to leave without him.”

“Come this way then, and we will take you to him, master,” said the friendly Baphuti. “But remember, you tarry there at the peril of your own life, and of those others. You are mad, you English. Death is close upon you, and you refuse to flee!”

It was perhaps as well for the little party of whites and faithful Baphutis that at that moment Casey and his few faithful men came running up. If they had tried to interfere with the rescue of the prisoners they would certainly have been killed. The keepers of the jail had wisely offered no resistance, and a few of the friendly Baphutis had succeeded in inducing the others to spare them. Casey was frantic, and protested against

the orders he had received to offer only passive resistance. Mr. Austin now realised the folly and hopelessness of attempting to defy that now excited mob. He knew those black people well, and realised it was only a question of a little time before they worked themselves up into a frenzy when nothing but the blood of every white man, woman, and child would satisfy them.

"It's no use, Casey. I am responsible for all of you, and you take your orders from me. I am told all the other whites have been turned out of camp. I have no right to jeopardise their lives by what would only be a foolish and futile action. Look, there are the others waiting for us under an escort of friendly Baphutis. We can consider ourselves lucky if we escape with our lives."

It was as the Resident said. The few white people in the village had been grouped together. The women and children had been hastily put on the backs of horses, and under an escort of black men they were hurried off. They had hardly got clear of the outlying fields that surrounded Silver Spruit before there was a great glare in the sky, and, looking back, the white

men saw the several European buildings in flames.

“There goes the Residency and our late homes!” cried Mr. Austin bitterly.

“And there the barracks and the jail!” cried Casey. “They’re on the war-path now, sure enough. That’s the work of Morosi and them precious sons of his—Masepuli, Letuka, and that spalpeen Dodo! Sorrow be on them! Shure, Mister Austin, an’ it’s dying I am to have a little shot at them.”

“You may have a chance of doing that before long, Casey, but in the meantime there’s the women and children to think of. If they take it into their heads to follow us up, you’ll have all the shooting you want. It’s only a toss up now whether we get clear of them or not.”

CHAPTER III

AN EXCITING RIDE

WHEN Jack Scott set out that night on his ride to Rouxville to warn the Cape Mounted Rifles that, if they would be in time to save the Residency and the white people in it, they must hurry up, he quite realised the dangers that beset the task. He more than suspected that Morosi or his sons would, in all probability, post a picket at a certain point on the road, just outside the settlement, so as to prevent any one leaving to seek outside help, and acted accordingly. He had taken the precaution to send his horse, Pat, to the outhouse of a friendly native, in case it should be tampered with in the Government stable, and there he had found it awaiting him.

By getting into a dry watercourse, and following it up, he managed to leave the settlement unseen. Once clear of it, he ascended the bank, keeping on the grass alongside the road. There

was one point where the latter had to pass through a chain of low broken kopjes, the track winding in and out through them. But he knew better than follow it. He more than suspected that some Basutos would be posted there, and he was correct in his surmises. He rode his horse on to the high ground on the north side, and the soft turf deadened the hoof beats. There was a quarter moon and considerable star-light, which enabled him to see fifty or sixty yards ahead. Then he nearly ran into four mounted natives, grouped in a little hollow which commanded a view of the road. For the moment he was filled with consternation. But he realised he must pass them, and proceed on his way at any cost.

Wheeling his horse he galloped off to the right. He knew every inch of the ground. He realised that if he struck a certain ridge he could pass along the top of it, while, if the others tried to cut him off, they might find themselves in a species of cul-de-sac. True, they must know the ground as well if not better than he did, but they would be hardly likely to credit him with what he intended doing.

“Ho, friend, where are you going?” cried

a voice. And he recognised his interrogator as Masepuli.

"To train my horse for the coming races," replied Jack, who was always ready with an answer. He pressed his heels into his horse's sides.

"Then wait a bit so that we can start fair, and we'll race with you," cried back the wily Baphuti, making towards the youth.

"You must give me a start, Masepuli," laughed Jack. "You're much too good a man for me. Besides, you're four to one. Just fifty yards and that new rifle of mine to a royal kaross that you don't catch me up within the next two hours."

He gave Pat his head, and the well-bred horse darted forward like a bolt shot from a cross-bow. He had been cooped up a long time in that wretched stable.

With head well down over his horse's neck, and every sense quickened, Jack headed towards the narrow ridge that cut the chain of low swelling kopjes. Unless he struck that narrow and tricky path exactly, he was done for. It was only a few feet in breadth where it trended upwards.

With something that sounded very like a burst of annoyance and anger, Masepuli dashed after him. Unfortunately for him, however, two of his companions got in his way, with the result that there was an ugly collision, and one of the Baphutis came down all of a heap. There were shouts of mutual recriminations, and before they could get a fresh start again, Jack was out of sight. But Masepuli was a smart young warrior, and he knew that if he went back to camp without having captured or killed Jack, those who were with him would let the cat out of the bag, and there would be considerable trouble awaiting him. He inwardly resolved that if he did go back without his object achieved, his companions would certainly not accompany him. Masepuli was a young man of resource, and had a conscience that was as elastic as it was accommodating. His misdeeds never worried him. It was the few things he had not succeeded in doing that troubled him.

Masepuli found the ridge that Jack had taken, and calling to the others to follow him, made off in the half light. He regretted he had not seen his way to shoot Jack when he first sighted him. He would have done so, only he knew

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there would have been such an outcry about the killing of the youth, and he could not trust those others. Besides, Morosi the chief, his father, had not yet openly declared war against the British. The latter had wisely abstained from taking any active part in the riot then proceeding. He had "gone out of town" so as not to be implicated. He was a wily old bird, was Morosi.

Masepuli realised he must catch up with Jack and square accounts with him. He nearly choked with rage when he thought of how the youth had twitted him, and given him the slip. If he did not succeed in overtaking Jack, he must go back to Silver Spruit and catch that younger cousin of his. That was rather a good idea. If he secured Percy in his stead, then in the event of any part of the story getting about, he could declare it was not Jack at all that he had chased in the first place, but Percy whom he had caught. And the chances were there would be no witnesses to testify to the contrary. He dug his heels viciously into the ribs of his horse.

It was a ticklish ride on that narrow ridge. In places it more resembled the top of a ruined

kraal wall than anything else. If his horse stumbled or lost its footing it would pitch over the ridge, and more than likely his neck and every bone in his body would be broken. Then behind him an agonised gasping cry, an ominous period of silence, a horrible crash, and he knew that one of his comrades had stumbled over that devil's ridge, and was out of the running. Well, one of them would not be able to split upon him anyhow. There was perhaps only one warrior now with whom he would have to ensure silence in the event of failure. But he was not going to fail. He was going to catch that cheeky young Englishman, and perhaps he would dispense with the formality of taking him prisoner. He would operate upon him in the way the Zulus had done with that French Prince some few weeks back in Natal, and that would somewhat relieve the personal hurt in his heart.

He reached the end of the ridge, struck the veldt once more, and instinctively followed in the direction he knew his enemy must have taken. He rode a fine horse and did not spare it.

On and still on through the dim half light

and over the now level veldt he galloped. He kept the straight road to Rouxville on his right, for he knew full well that that was the way Jack had gone. Once he was in doubt, and reining up he jumped off his reeking horse, put his head into the burrow of some animal, and listened. He cursed his remaining companion, who had now come up, ordering him to keep his horse perfectly still.

Yes, that wonderful telephone Mother Earth carried the klipperty-klop of the young Englishman's horse to him with wonderful distinctness. He could not be more than half a mile ahead now, and he did not think there could be much staying power in Jack's racer. His own mount was one of the best in Basutoland.

"Up again and after him, Dingan," he cried. "We shall catch that slim youth yet. Something will happen if you don't catch him."

There was no use mincing matters with a man who had the misfortune to bear such a distinguished name as Dingan. If he could not live up to it, he would have to die. Dingan must be sensible of that himself.

To return, or rather to go forward, to Jack, it was not long before he became aware that he

was still being pursued, that two of the enemy were, in fact, gaining upon him. He could not be more than fifteen miles now from Stork Spruit, and surely Masepuli—for he felt certain he was one of his pursuers—and the other Baphuti would not risk coming too near the camp of British troops. Looking back in the saddle he could actually see the Baphutis, though dimly. Then he became aware of a piece of ill-luck that sent a thrill of fear and apprehension through him.

Something had gone wrong with his horse. It was moving stiffly—just as if it had gone lame, fractured its pestle bone or foundered. He felt that it could not go much farther, and that Masepuli the stayer must speedily overtake him.

Then a minute or two of respite, and a thrill of apprehension again. His pursuers had stopped. Had they given up the chase just at the moment when he realised his horse had knocked up, and could go no farther? It was surely too good to be true. Then *bang, bang, whiz—zip*, and his apprehensions were justified. The enemy had dismounted, and were firing upon him. Of course they could not take good

aim in that dim light, and he was a moving target, but the bullets whistled past him with a very disconcerting sound indeed. It seemed to Jack they only missed him by the narrowest margin imaginable. His horse, as if conscious of the danger, seemed to rally for the moment and put on a spurt. It was evident it knew what the whistle of a bullet meant. Then to Jack's consternation it slowed down, limped painfully, and almost came to a standstill.

Whatever the matter was with Pat it had asserted itself at last. He could go no farther. All Jack could do now was to dismount and make the best fight he could. He knew that for the trouble he had caused him, Masepuli would make an end of him. He would take care to put his body well out of the way. And what chance had Jack with a revolver against two natives armed with rifles! But they would not take him alive—Jack knew the horror that meant. He would fight to the last. Then if they did mutilate him—and black men nearly always did—he would know nothing about it.

Bang, bang, whiz, zip! And now Jack saw that one of the enemy had mounted again and was riding towards him, while the other with

fiendish cunning still lay prostrate and continued firing. Jack, like many more colonial youths, had trained his horse to lie down, and now made it do so. He lay down behind it. There was no other cover on that bare veldt. Jack took careful aim over his prostrate steed and fired at the approaching enemy. None of his bullets seemed to take effect. The approaching Baphuti was now within fifty paces of him. He evidently intended to make very sure of Jack. In all probability his idea was to take him alive. Then a remarkable thing happened. There was a report from the rear, the Baphuti threw up his hands, and fell all of a heap to the earth, while his horse galloped off some fifty yards or so, then stood still.

But it was not Jack who had shot him, and it was not Masepuli who was shot. That gentleman, for reasons best known to himself, had taken this opportunity of putting his comrade out of the way. The latter would carry no tales back to camp.

Then Masepuli, with a hardihood that did him credit, advanced upon Jack. The latter took careful aim at him, and fired. The black man ducked, and retreated to his horse again.

The white lad was a better shot than he had imagined. But it was only a question of a very few minutes before he would shoot both him and his horse. A white boy with a revolver had not much of a show against a Basuto warrior with a rifle. He would begin by shooting his horse.

He was in the act of raising his rifle to the shoulder, when a series of sounds fell on his ears that filled him, desperate and foolhardy man that he was, with alarm and chagrin. In the distance he could hear what sounded like a large body of horsemen approaching. In the still clear air he could now distinguish the jingle and clank of steel bits and scabbards. The volume of sound grew, and one could make out the shouted words of command. It was an approaching troop of cavalry. They must have been travelling by night, and hearing the firing have suspected trouble, and galloped up. Jack took heart again, and raised his head to have a shot at Masepuli. But the latter had still his wits about him, and took the opportunity of having a last pot shot at his adversary.

Bang, whiz! and Jack's hat went spinning

from his head. It was a close call. For the moment it checked the cheer that was on his lips. Then he saw that Masepuli was about to spring on the back of his horse. To take aim and fire was the work of a moment. Evidently the animal was hit, for it sprang forward, and broke away from Masepuli. With a hoarse ejaculation of anger the black man bounded after it. But he could not catch it.

Jack had now sprung to his feet, and was giving his late adversary a bad time. It was something that Masepuli would remember against him for many a long day if he happened to survive the ordeal he was just then passing through. Jack could hear the troop or squadron of cavalry hurrying up to see what the trouble was all about. More than likely they had got wind of the affair at Silver Spruit, and had a good guess as to the situation.

Masepuli, doubtless realising that the time for revenging himself on Jack had passed, and that if he stayed there much longer he would find himself in Queer Street, now made for his late comrade's horse. How fortunate for him that he had disposed of its former owner! He caught it, vaulted into the saddle, turned its

head homeward again, and was off like the wind. The darkness, such as it meant in those latitudes, that precedes the dawn, favoured his escape, and in a minute or two he was out of sight. Jack hastened his departure with two or three shots. A few minutes more and a number of men whom Jack at once recognised as the Cape Mounted Rifles thundered up. He was now urging his plucky steed, Pat, on to its legs again.

"Shure, an' what's the trouble, me bhoy?" cried a sergeant who was evidently in charge of the party.

"It's at Silver Spruit the trouble is," said Jack. "I wish some of you would push on there, otherwise it may be too late. I fear my horse has gone lame. I'll just have a look at it first."

But the Irishman's experienced eye had spotted the trouble. "A stone wedged in the off hind shoe av him," he explained, and in another minute that which had nearly been the cause of costing Jack his life was removed by an obliging trooper.

"Now, up wid you again, and tell us all about it," said the sergeant. "Corporal Reed, take

four men, and if ye can't catch the inimy kape him on the move. But take care he doesn't lead ye into a trap. We'll be doing a little walk now just to let the horses git back their wind."

CHAPTER IV

IN THE NICK OF TIME

NEEDLESS to say it was with a sense of heartfelt thankfulness that Jack hailed the coming of the Cape Mounted Rifles, or the C.M.R. as they are locally known, and may frequently be called hereafter in this tale for the sake of brevity.

Sergeant Terence Macnamara, who was the light-hearted non-com. in charge of the small party, then explained that the main body of his corps was on the way to the relief of the Residency. His party was only a small one in advance. They had received word at Rouxville regarding the serious nature of the situation through native runners. The wonderfully quick way by which news can be transmitted by relays of black men for immense distances has always been somewhat of a mystery to white people. Undoubtedly, in many cases, news is conveyed by a signal code, practically as complete as that

used by our heliographers during manœuvres or in war time.

There was no time to trouble about Masepuli's dead victim just then. The lives of white people at Silver Spruit were possibly in danger. As Sergeant Macnamara observed, "It was high time to take tay wid ould Morosi and them skellums of sons of his." As he rode on with Jack he could hardly disguise his obvious hope that the "black dhivils would put up a bit of a fight." He wasn't without some previous experience of Morosi and his sons. There was an old score he had up against Dodo, and Masepuli in particular. The latter had got ahead of him, and he would have to be very slim indeed if he managed to repeat the action. When he heard it was Masepuli who had just made himself scarce, he regretted that he had not been aware of his identity sooner. But take tea he would with that spalpeen Masepuli, and that before long. It was quite obvious to Jack that Macnamara was going to have the treat of his life, the opportunity of squaring accounts with Morosi and his sons.

Owing to the distance they had travelled,

and the rate at which they had come, their pace was now necessarily slow. They would all have liked to have hastened on, but their horse-flesh was showing signs of exhaustion, and they could not afford to risk doing it permanent injury. The corporal and four men who were following up Masepuli might convey a warning to those at Silver Spruit to go gently.

A wan dawnlight was now struggling into the eastern sky. The great far-stretching South African veldt was showing up grey and cold. All but one or two stars had faded from the vault of the heavens. Distant objects grew upon the sight. Shadows resolved themselves into long low stretches of ghostly hillside. A tinge of yellow showed in the east. It spread upwards and gave place to a dash of orange, and then the quivering and glowing disc of the sun appeared, and the whole world was flooded with the cheerful light of day. It was a glorious dawn.

They were pacing quickly up a gentle slope, and Jack was relating to Sergeant Macnamara some of the events that had led up to the recent trouble, when the sound of rifle fire was heard

ahead of them. Only but for that intervening ridge, and the clatter of their horses' feet amongst the stones, they might have heard it sooner.

“Now then, by the right, bhoys, and gallop for all you are worth,” cried Macnamara. “There’s trouble of some kind ahead.”

When they topped the crest of the ridge the cause of the firing was plainly visible. Mr. Austin, the resident magistrate, with the whites of the settlement and some of the friendly natives, were keeping a superior force of Baphutis at bay. Some of the latter, after participating in the burning of the Residency and other European buildings, becoming intoxicated with the old spirit of warfare—second nature to them in the past—had regretted allowing the whites to leave the settlement so easily, and so had made after them in order to wipe them out altogether. As has been said in a former chapter, they, the refugees, had been overtaken, but owing to the darkness, and the prompt and efficient resistance of the white men and friendly Baphutis accompanying them, they had stood the enemy off until daylight. Fortunately for

them their exact number had not been known. The unexpected arrival of Masepuli upon the scene had stimulated the attackers to fresh endeavour. The chief's able if rascally son had rallied and organised the attackers, and but for the timely arrival of Corporal Reed and his four troopers, the Government party would have been wiped out long before. As it was, they were hard pressed, and the Baphutis were gradually closing in upon them with that half-circle formation which is so deadly in native warfare. There must have been two or three hundred natives engaged in the fight.

Quickly Macnamara divided his little force into two parties. He directed them how to spread out and attack each flank of the enemy by riding up from behind on to the horns of the crescent. Then he gave the word of command.

“ Now then, bhoys, each wan of ye cheer as if ye was a dozen men, and take tay wid them ! ” and in another moment they were off.

But the apparition of what the attackers naturally took to be the main body, or at least

the advance guard of the dreaded C.M.R. coming over the hill, and charging them for all they were worth, was too much for the Baphutis in such open country. Moreover, by the way these mad British cheered and charged down upon them, it was fairly certain there was a still larger force at their backs. It was therefore madness to stay in that unsuitable fighting ground to be shot down like blesbok. There was no end to these C.M.R., and they were one and all of them first-class shots.

In another minute the attacking Baphutis were in full retreat. Such of them as had horses made back for them with all possible despatch. Those who had no horses did themselves infinite credit by the way they ran. They established records for themselves on that day. But Mr. Austin, though he would have been justified in allowing the C.M.R. to follow the openly rebellious Baphutis up, and punishing them, had to think of what it would all mean to the Government if a general war with the Basuto nation was the consequence, so ordered Sergeant Macnamara not to continue the pursuit.

“ You see,” he explained, “ the Baphutis are only a tribe of the Basuto nation. The Government would not thank me for perhaps stirring up still greater trouble at the present time, seeing the British at the present moment are fighting the Zulus under Cetewayo in Natal. I must see Morosi himself, and prevent things going further if possible. If he delivers up Dodo and Masepuli, and some of the ring-leaders, the British Government may be satisfied. I cannot institute a war on my own initiative.”

“ Very good, sir, but if I may make so bold as to say it, I think ye’ll not find it exactly aisy to prevent throuble. It’s the Baphutis I’ll be knowing like my own kith and kin. Our main body will be up some time to-day. In the meantime, I think I’ve got some despatches for you, sir,” and Sergeant Macnamara took a large envelope from the inside of his serge and handed it to Mr. Austin.

The magistrate quickly opened it, and perused its contents.

“ The Government knows more about this affair than I had given them credit for,” he said.

“We’ve got to make for Stork Spruit, which is only a few miles from here. The rest of the C.M.R. and the volunteers, with the artillery, will be there by to-night. I have to give Morosi another chance (they can hardly have known what happened last night), and if he doesn’t hand over those who have been stirring up this rebellion lately, then we’ve got to make an example of them. And now we’ll have some coffee—I’m sure every one wants it badly—and then press on.”

Fortunately, with the exception of one or two slight wounds, nothing serious had happened to any of the party. The retreating Baphutis were allowed to continue their headlong flight, and the entire party made for a camp by running water where much needed refreshments were distributed. Needless to say, Jack and Percy were delighted to see each other again, and Mr. Austin, though much concerned over the wrecking of the Residency and the rupture between the authority he represented and the Baphutis, felt much relieved at the turn things had taken. It had been a heavy responsibility for one man to carry on his shoulders. However, before

evening reinforcements would be on the ground, and they would be at least safe from further molestation. It remained with him to see the chief, Morosi, personally, and try if possible to avert a war.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH IMPORTANT THINGS HAPPEN

MOROSI, the chief, had vacated the town of Silver Spruit. He, with his Baphutis, on the approach of the main body of the troops—the C.M.R. and the Volunteer Artillery—had only time to retire to a high hill before the British were practically at his gates. It was sad to see the ruined Residency and the Government buildings. Some one would have to pay for them. The day after the events narrated in the last chapter Mr. Austin was having an interview with the officer commanding the troops.

“Of course the Government doesn’t want trouble just now,” said the Resident. “They have asked me to give Morosi one more chance. Now, I propose to go and see him personally on that mountain, and if he will deliver up Dodo and the ringleaders of the recent riots, and agree to compensate the Government for the damage done, I’ve no doubt another little war may be

averted. You see, what with the present campaign in Zululand, and one thing and another, Britain has got her hands more than full at present."

"I grant you that about Britain having her hands more than full," said the Officer Commanding, "and I agree with you it would be a good thing if we could finish this business before it goes any further, but I warn you to be careful how you trust yourself in the hands of old Morosi. I wouldn't feel exactly happy knowing I was at his tender mercies."

"I feel that I've perhaps listened too much to some of those people at home who make a great outcry about things they cannot possibly understand," observed Mr. Austin sadly, "but war is a ghastly thing, and I fear that my magnanimity—a thing black people generally mistake for timidity or something worse—has to a great extent contributed to this outbreak, so I must accept a certain amount of responsibility for the trouble. I'll go and see Morosi this very afternoon."

"But can you trust yourself in the hands of that old ingrate, and those three still more

villainous sons of his ? ” asked the Commanding Officer. “ They might kill you, you know, or detain you as a sort of hostage.”

“ I must risk it,” was the reply. “ You see, my leaving Silver Spruit so hurriedly might be misinterpreted. Of course I only did so to avoid a general massacre. My going alone to Morosi now may refute the inevitable home outcry.”

“ All right ! ” said the officer with characteristic brevity. “ But you’d better take a witness with you. There’s Sergeant Macnamara of the C.M.R., he can speak the language like a native, with the added charm of a delightful Irish accent. Take him with you if he’s agreeable, and, judging by what I know of him, he’ll simply jump at the chance.”

As the officer predicted, Sergeant Macnamara was highly delighted to have such an opportunity. He even, as delicately as his difference in rank permitted, hinted at the advisability of ascending the mountain and interviewing Morosi with as little delay as possible. He said it was always disastrous when a black man had too much time to think—he almost invariably did something

he ought not to do while he was supposed to be thinking.

While it was yet early in the afternoon, Mr. Austin, accompanied by Macnamara, both unarmed, and the latter carrying a white flag, approached the outposts of the Baphutis at the foot of the steep hill which was only two and a half miles from Silver Spruit. The Government troops were camped facing it about a mile distant. At the foot of the mountain a head man of the Baphutis met them, and after mutual greetings—for Mr. Austin, despite what had happened, had always commanded the respect and confidence of the people he had lived amongst—was conducted up the hill to Morosi, the chief.

Morosi was a well-set-up man, somewhat past the prime of life. He had been a famous general in days gone by. It was mainly through him that the Basuto army had succeeded in defeating Sir George Cathcart when he had fought the former. But since then Basutoland had come under the protection of the British. Peaceful times had exerted a pernicious influence upon the old warrior, seeing many generations had imbued him with a warlike spirit, and he could

not adapt himself to his changed surroundings. Still, and it would only be anticipating to explain now, there was a pastime which he indulged in which was to cause the British very considerable trouble in the immediate future.

Morosi received them courteously enough. He was even not a little shamefaced when he spoke to the Resident, whose house and property his people had destroyed. As for Mr. Austin, when he passed with Macnamara through numerous groups of armed warriors—and there must have been nearly two thousand of them present—he was in no way perturbed. He returned their salutations with easy dignity, if a trifle gravely. He had evidently not the very slightest apprehension regarding his personal safety.

Any other man than Macnamara, under the circumstances, might have been excused had he shown some timidity in thus trusting himself in the hands of those black warriors, the terrible tales of whom in the past might have tried the nerve of many a brave man. On more than one occasion they had not respected the sanctity of a peaceful envoy, and the gruesome death to

which the unfortunate one had been subjected was surely something to imbue others with distrust for all time. Such memories with the light-hearted Irishman did not seem to weigh at all. A species of perpetual grin, which it appeared he was desirous of repressing but could not, wrinkled his face. His keen and restless eyes roamed all around. One would have thought the attitude of the Baphutis only amused him. When he recognised some old acquaintance amongst the black men, he either gave them a series of quick nods or winks in recognition or addressed them in a few chaffing words which, almost invariably, made the women and young people who were present grin immoderately. Even the warriors themselves seemed to consider the Irishman a joke, and though they tried hard to preserve their gravity, they but ill succeeded in doing so.

When Mr. Austin, with Macnamara slightly behind him, sat on the ground opposite Morosi, who was surrounded by most of his principal men, the palaver began. Neither Masepuli, Dodo, nor Letuka were to be seen.

To be brief, Mr. Austin demanded the giving

up to the British of the ringleaders in the late outrage, and explained to Morosi what the consequences would be if he refused.

But the chief, for reasons best known to himself, asked for a week to consider matters. Either he could not or would not accede to the demands of the British just then.

"It is a hard thing, O Chief, for me to ask you to give up three of your sons," said Mr. Austin, "but they have been the principals in the stirring up of trouble, and have openly attacked the British. Before the consequences of your acts can be averted, it is necessary that they should submit themselves for trial to the British. I can guarantee that they will meet with a fair one, and justice, and that every allowance will be made for them."

"You must give me, as I have said, a week to consider all your demands," said Morosi stolidly. "My people have got a little out of hand. Your sudden action in trying to enforce the hut-tax took us somewhat by surprise, and found us unprepared. I have spoken."

"I can only acquaint the Government with

what you have said," replied the Resident. "But as a friend, and as one man to another, Morosi, beware evil counsel. If trouble is to ensue, it will be disastrous to you and yours. In the meantime, think well over what I have said. Good-bye."

They left the presence of the chief, and again passed through numerous groups of the Baphutis. Macnamara gazed curiously around upon them. He had an odd presentiment that before long he would be engaged in a life or death struggle with these same men. Macnamara loved his fellows, and was a generous enemy, but he was also an Irishman, and he knew that if it was a case of fighting, well, he would make some of these same warriors hop around. He was descending a steep path alongside a ledge of rocks when something whizzed past his ear. Next moment an egg sputtered on the cliff within a foot or two of his head, and a yellow splash showed up.

Quick as thought the Irishman turned. Masepuli had not been quick enough, for Macnamara caught sight of his grinning face ere it disappeared.

“Hold hard, Sergeant, your turn will come in good time,” cried the magistrate as he saw the movement Macnamara had made to make back and punish the offender. “Remember, you are on duty now.”

Macnamara remembered in time, and doubtless it required more moral courage on his part to restrain himself, than to advance upon and chastise his insulter.

Without taking any further notice of the incident they passed down the hill until they left the last pickets of the Baphutis behind, and made for the British camp. After Mr. Austin had acquainted the Officer Commanding the troops with the result of his mission, the latter expressed a desire to question Macnamara, who was paraded before him.

“Well, Sergeant Macnamara,” said the officer, “what do you think about granting those fellows a week’s grace?”

“It’s five minutes I’d be giving them, Colonel, and dhivil a minute longer,” said Macnamara earnestly. “Shure an’ if you’ll be giving them a week it’ll be a year it will take you to make up for that same time, or I’m greatly mistaken.

It's the dhivil's own thricks them fellers 'll be after, and mind I'm tellin' ye."

The Commanding Officer laughed.

"You may be right, and I'm not saying you're wrong, Sergeant," he said. "But the fact of the matter is, I'm afraid we'll have to grant them these seven days. You see, we're hardly strong enough to insist on getting our own way just at present. When we get reinforcements up, and they'll be here in the course of a week or so, we'll be in a position to talk to them."

"And it's a long speaking trumpet you'll be requiring to talk to Morosi by that time, Colonel, if I may make so bould," was the obviously sincere reply.

"Well, as an old South African fighter, I wanted to hear your opinion of the situation," was the comment. "I see you haven't much faith in them complying with our demands. In the meantime we must hurry up those reinforcements."

Within the next several days Sergeant Macnamara was a very indignant man indeed, for the Officer Commanding had given orders that until a certain date no one was to approach

within a certain distance of the Baphuti camp. An encounter between the British and the natives at this stage was perhaps wisely enough deemed inadvisable, as the latter undoubtedly greatly outnumbered the English troops. The latter had to content themselves with watching the enemy moving about on the hill at a distance. At night the troops formed up into laager in case of attack. The first few days of this enforced inaction was not much felt by Jack and Percy, as they passed most of their time drilling with the C.M.R. They had temporarily attached themselves to that smart corps. They had taken a great fancy to Sergeant Macnamara. That gallant soldier seemed to afford them considerable entertainment, what with his predilection to make fun of everything that came along, and his never-failing supply of jokes.

The seven days' grace which Morosi had asked for had expired, and now fortunately the small British force was largely augmented by the arrival of several hundred Cape Mounted Riflemen, Yeomanry, and native levies, principally Fingoes, who, by the way, are poor fighters compared with the Zulus or Basutos. The

Baphuti chief, in the meantime, had made no signs of complying with the demands of the Government.

"Unless Morosi gives up those men by to-morrow at twelve noon," the Officer Commanding said, "we shall advance and take the hill."

He said it as if the matter were all cut and dried, and the methods of a primitive people were not worthy of a moment's consideration where the Queen's regulations and the British drill book were concerned.

Percy Scott had gone out at dusk with one of the C.M.R. scouts to reconnoitre the position of the enemy. The Mounted Rifleman had taken the lad with him, because personally the latter knew every inch of the ground, and in the event of meeting with any Baphutis, he could act as interpreter. Mr. Austin had been visiting an old acquaintance in some neighbouring camp when Percy started out, otherwise he would have acquainted him with his intended movements. He however saw Jack and told him.

"I'd like to go myself," Jack had said, "but as they haven't asked me I don't suppose they

want me on this trip. But you'd better be careful, Percy. You see, these Baphutis know something is bound to happen to-morrow, and it's just possible they may be on the war-path to-night. I'd much rather you weren't going."

But Percy only laughed and told his cousin that nothing was likely to happen on this particular occasion. The Baphutis were not going to cut up rough now that they could see a very much superior force had arrived. It must have been rather a surprise to them to observe how they were being reinforced.

"I'll be back in two or three hours' time, Jack," said Percy. "I've got quite a regard for my own skin, as you know, old man, and I promise you to take care of myself. If you happen to have any coffee in the kettle when I come back, I need hardly say it will be appreciated. Good-bye in the meantime."

And so saying the lad went off with the scout. Somehow, Jack did not altogether like him going. The elder cousin had come to look upon the younger one almost as a brother, and felt a certain degree of responsibility in regard to his safety.

Percy, and Cullum the scout, rode out of the camp just as it began to grow dark. But the moon would be up in an hour or so, and it would be easy to see what they were doing. Anyhow, Percy knew the hill where the Baphutis were camped well, and there was one part of it he particularly wanted to have a look at. The hill or kopje in question, like nearly all the hills in that locality, resembled an inclined plane, three sides were rocky and almost precipitous.

"We'd better keep well out from the rock, so as not to be seen," said Cullum, "but perhaps it's too dark for them to distinguish us now. I'd like to completely encircle it."

"There's a long narrow gully runs right up it at the far end," observed Percy. "If the Baphutis wanted to come down and attack us, there's nothing to prevent them getting down at that point. Sentries are all very well at the main approach to the rock, but those Baphutis would be bigger fools than I take them for if they attempted to come down that way."

"I can't understand why we haven't got pickets stationed all round this rock, seeing we're now reinforced," observed Cullum, who

was an old and experienced South African fighter.

"But I suppose the O.C. knows his business."

"I'll tell you what might simplify matters," suggested Percy. "Supposing you go round the kopje one way, I'll go round the other, and we'll both meet at the back of it. Look out for a solitary rock showing up through a clump of trees about three hundred yards out from the foot of the cliff."

"Yes, that would be the most sensible thing to do," agreed Cullum. "For supposing both of us go together, an enemy might be approaching the camp unseen on the other side. Should either of us see anything, all we've got to do is to cut back and tell the pickets. We can both make back together when we meet."

The two separated, Cullum keeping on the east side of the hill, and Percy on the west. No sooner did the latter find himself alone than an idea occurred to him. He would have a look at that kloof, which if followed up would lead to the summit of the hill. It ought to have been watched. He could not for the life of him understand why soldiers did not take precautions that so-called savages never failed

to take. Doubtless it was their self-sufficiency that contributed to this lax condition of things. It could do no good shutting one's eyes to the truth.

In order that he might be able to examine the kloof before Cullum arrived on the scene, he put his horse to the gallop. The moon was now up, and in order to escape observation he kept well out from the rock. He made for the stream, but instead of crossing, continued up it for some considerable distance. This was not in order to cover his tracks, for there was no necessity to do that just then. It was simply to enable him to pursue a more direct way, and to save himself crossing a certain particularly stony and difficult ridge. The latter passed, he made out on to the veldt again, and then coming upon a belt of timber that stretched towards the hill he dismounted, leaving his horse tied up in the shadow. He then advanced in the direction of the rock on foot.

The moon was now up, and a dusky greyness flooded the world. One could see objects indistinctly a hundred yards or so distant. Percy could hear the baboons chattering and barking

in the kloofs, but he did not heed them. He was fast approaching the spot he wished to have a peep at, when suddenly he heard something that for the moment rooted him to the spot, and made him wish his horse was handy.

It was the sound of human voices, and these quite near at hand. Indeed, they were only on the other side of the fringe of trees and bushes which, at that moment, he was skirting. Instinctively he dived into the shadow, lay face downwards, and crawled forward to see and to listen.

What he beheld filled him with astonishment and something akin to dismay. There was a great procession of Baphutis armed and loaded up with household belongings heading from the kloof. It was evident they were vacating the rock and treking north. It was difficult to say for how long the exodus had been going on. And the British had left this spot unwatched ! There could be no doubt that either the sight of the reinforcements had been too much for the Baphutis, or that now having perfected other plans, and completed other arrangements, they were acting accordingly. Whichever way it

was, the Baphutis were in the act of giving the British the slip, and he must get back to camp with all speed and warn the Officer Commanding. Cullum would of course discover the situation for himself, and also make back to camp. If only he acted quickly the British might yet be in time to intercept the escaping Baphutis.

He was raising himself on to his hands and knees when, suddenly, he felt himself gripped from behind. Next moment he was pushed forward on his face, and was at the mercy of an unseen enemy.

CHAPTER VI

THE TOLL OF CLEMENCY

WHEN Percy did not return to camp about the time he said he would, Jack was considerably exercised about him. At first he tried to make himself believe that of course his cousin had made a bigger circuit than he had at first intended, and, after all, Cullum the scout was with him, and that individual was an old and experienced hand.

Jack, finding it impossible to go to sleep, got up and visited the scout's camp to ascertain whether or not he had returned.

But Cullum was still absent. He was loth to alarm his uncle, Mr. Austin, but at last he was obliged to do so. It was now two or three o'clock in the morning. As it was impossible to say where exactly the missing pair were, or to look for tracks in the darkness, there was nothing for it but to wait for daylight. Percy's prolonged absence occasioned Mr. Austin and

Jack considerable anxiety, though they tried to make themselves believe that something had attracted the attention of the absentees, and that they had remained away in order to make certain observations.

At daybreak the officer commanding the C.M.R. was communicated with, and a patrol was sent out to try and pick up the tracks of the missing ones. The place was found where Percy and the scout had parted company. The search party divided, one lot tracked Percy's horse to the stream, where, of course, all traces of him were lost. His travelling some considerable distance up the shallow water led them astray. As for Cullum's tracks, Mr. Austin and Jack followed close on the little Bushman, or "Tottie" as he was called, who followed the sometimes almost indistinguishable hoof-prints of the scout's horse at a brisk trot. Before long they must surely come to some sign of the missing one, for at this stage they could not determine whether the spoor was that of Percy's horse or the scout's, though Jack, at one place where there was a clay flat, got off and expressed the opinion that the hoofs of the animal they followed

were too narrow to belong to the horse his cousin had ridden. The boy's comparatively short sojourn on the veldt had already taught him to use his powers of observation and natural deduction. He was confirmed in his judgment when, some distance further on, they approached a rocky rise where the rider had dismounted. He had hitched his horse to a tree, and ascended the ridge to have a look around. And at the foot of it the prints of a boot were plainly visible.

"They are not Percy's boots," said Jack. "These are Cullum's tracks, and I know he was wearing a new pair of boots. Look how clearly cut and distinct they are. Cullum's foot was no bigger, but I know what Percy's boots are like."

The Hottentot confirmed the correctness of Jack's statement.

They picked up the horse-tracks again until they were well behind the hill. Here the Hottentot stopped, and made that curious clicking sound with his tongue, at the same time pointing to the ground.

"Tracks of natives!" said Mr. Austin. "I

don't like this at all, Jack. I'm afraid they've been seen and followed up. Anyhow, there have been natives here since Cullum was this way. Trouble seems to have been dogging our steps of late."

It was evident that the magistrate was apprehensive of something serious having happened to the pair. It was unlikely Percy would have stayed away so long knowing the anxiety he must cause the others by his doing so. Jack was sorry for Mr. Austin, for he knew it was not with his consent that his cousin had gone out on the previous night. As has been said, he was away when the lad had gone to tell him of his proposed trip.

The search party came to a little clearing on either side of which was a quantity of timber. There was a ruined kraal here. The Hottentot, who was in the lead, passed quickly round it. There were a great number of human tracks at this point obviously freshly made. Then suddenly the Hottentot stopped and clucked, at the same time pointing fixedly to something that lay all of a heap on the ground like a bundle of rags. Mr. Austin and Jack were conscious

of seeing great ominous stains of red on the ground, and on what was obviously clothing. For the moment it seemed as if Time itself stood still.

“Stand back, Jack, keep back!” cried the magistrate.

It was pitiful to witness the great fear and apprehension in his face and manner.

But there was no need to keep back now. The tragedy was there, glaringly, appallingly plain.

The bundle of rags—the huddled thing on the ground—was the body of Cullum the scout. A broken assegai lay alongside him. There were marks everywhere of a terrible struggle. The body was cold and stiff.

Cullum the scout had set out on his last trip—the One Way Trail.

CHAPTER VII

A STARTLING DEVELOPMENT

THE story of the killing of Cullum the scout was very plain. He had been surprised by the Baphutis, cornered, and done to death. A horrible fear seized upon those who saw the body. They were almost afraid to look around lest they should discover another victim. As they instinctively took off their hats in the solemn presence of Death, it was a minute or two before any one could find words to express what was in his mind. It was Mr. Austin who first broke the silence.

“We must mark the spot and come back for the body again,” he said. “We’ll have to push on now and look for Percy. I can only hope he is safe.”

“He was a favourite with all the Baphutis,” said Jack, who could hardly command his voice. “I cannot think—I will not believe they have

treated him like this. They may have taken him prisoner."

"He may have had to run for it, and been unable to regain the camp," commented the magistrate. "In the meantime, we must push on and meet the others. They may have some news. It will in any case be absolutely necessary to get back to the column. The Officer Commanding issued strict orders in regard to this. Let us get on."

Leaving behind them the ghastly thing that had only a few hours before been a man, they spread out and pushed on, keeping a sharp look-out for further discoveries. It was some relief to Mr. Austin and Jack that no signs of Percy having been there with Cullum were visible. To Jack it was as if the whole world had changed. The first hint of the tragedy in life had changed its hitherto smiling outlook to one of gloom. He had always liked his cousin, but now the kindly thought and manly straightforward nature of the younger lad came home to him in a way it had never done before. There was a lump in his throat, and a heaviness in his heart such as he had never before experienced.

He felt weighed down by a sense of loss that was overwhelming. It was all horrible, incomprehensible, this being brought suddenly face to face with tragedy. If anything had happened to his cousin the world would never be the same place to him again. Of such are the thoughts that crush down upon the soul when for the first time sorrow knocks at one's door with harsh hand.

Mr. Austin saw the expression of stupefaction on his nephew's face, and rallied him.

"It's perhaps not as bad as we imagine," he said. "Indeed, we are hardly justified in fearing the worst at all. As you say, I don't think any of the Baphutis would do Percy any particular harm. He was always such a favourite with them all. Besides, he was not with Cullum. But we'll meet with the others soon, and perhaps they'll have some news."

They rode on, keeping the same keen look-out, and in twenty minutes or so more met the others who had gone round the rock on the other side.

But they had nothing definite to communicate concerning Percy. His tracks had been lost

at the stream, and they had not been able to pick them up again. Had more time been at their disposal, they would in all probability have done so, but their orders had been to push on as the time was limited. It was all a very unsatisfactory and mysterious situation.

“We met with a very large number of tracks coming from the direction of the rock,” said the non-com. in charge of the party which had gone round by the other side. “They were, of course, natives, and going towards the north. As usual, they travelled in Indian file, so it was exceedingly difficult to compute their numbers. Still, there was a very large body of them. There was no time to learn more.”

Just then a dull hollow roar, followed by a series of echoes, broke the stillness.

“There goes the old mortar of 1802,” exclaimed Mr. Austin. “I know the noise it makes so well. That same old piece of artillery has figured in many of the old Kaffir wars. It is the signal for us to return. There is no help for it, we must get back at once. Something has happened, or is going to happen.”

Mr. Austin was going to add that perhaps

Percy had returned to camp, and the firing of the mortar was a signal for them to hurry back, but as he realised that to raise what might prove to be false hopes, might only be to prepare still more bitter disappointment for them, he wisely forbore to make any further comment. In a comparatively short time they were back in camp. Mr. Austin at once reported their discovery to the Officer Commanding the troops, who at once ordered out a fresh search party with a skilled Bushman tracker.

“I’ve just given orders to prepare for an advance on the hill,” said Colonel Bayley, the O.C., to the magistrate. “It is quite possible we may learn something concerning your nephew there. It seems they must have made a sortie last night, and fallen in with your nephew and Cullum. It looks as if your nephew had made good his escape, but couldn’t get back to camp. Anyhow, we’re pretty sure to learn something. In the meantime, I’ve sent a man to Morosi with a flag to give them a final chance of surrendering.”

“May I ask who you have sent up?” inquired Mr. Austin.

“Sergeant Macnamara of the C.M.R. He knows these people of old. He will signal to us from the top.”

“Did he seem hopeful about his mission?” queried Mr. Austin. He wondered if Macnamara had suspected what he did.

“He had something to say, as he usually has,” replied the O.C., with the suspicion of a smile. “He begged my pardon, and expressed the opinion that, if we wanted to talk to Morosi, it was quite possible we would have to be ready to start out and look for him in another direction. Only that the fellow was perfectly respectful and obviously sincere, I’d have had him court-martialled on the spot. But it’s only Macnamara’s way of expressing himself.”

Despite the apprehension and sense of impending misfortune that was hanging over Mr. Austin like a nightmare, it came home to him that there was more in what the Irishman had said than had dawned on the mind of Colonel Bayley. It gave him a ray of hope.

“Macnamara ought to have reached Morosi’s camp by now,” said the O.C. “Will you wait and hear what he has to say before you go out?”

He is a skilled signaller, as you know, and will flag us a message from the summit. Some of my staff here are looking out for him. Hello, what's that, Boyle?" he turned to a signaller, who stood hard by, gazing up at the hill through a telescope fixed on a stand.

"It's Sergeant Macnamara, sir, and he's signalling," replied the staff man, keeping his eye glued to the instrument. His lips were parted as if he were listening.

"Morosi—with—Baphutis—cleared—out—last—night," repeated the signaller, with what seemed to those who hung on his words exasperating slowness.

There was a short pause, and the O.C. tapped impatiently on the ground with his foot. It seemed that Sergeant Macnamara did not believe in mixing up his messages. Still it took time to spell out a message letter by letter. An officer stood alongside the man at the telescope, taking down the message in a book, word for word as it was spoken.

"Only—few—old—women—sick—men—and—children—here."

"Ask Macnamara where they have gone to?"

said the O.C., but ill-concealing his surprise and chagrin.

Another signaller raised his flags, and next moment was transmitting the question. Then a lengthy pause, during which it was not difficult to see that the O.C. suffered very considerably from impatience. At last the man at the telescope said, in a voice as monotonous and mechanical as a speech heard through the medium of a gramophone, only with the usual exasperating slowness :

“ Gone — Morosi’s — Mountain — twenty — miles — north — on — Orange — River — junction — with — Quithing — Friendly — native — says — it — is — mountain — Morosi — has — been — fortifying — for — some — years.”

“ The dickens ! ” exclaimed the O.C., while his face fell. “ I did hear about the hobby Morosi had of fortifying that mountain, but no one ever seemed to attach any importance to it.”

“ I reported the matter to the Government two years ago, and asked for permission to stop him,” said Mr. Austin, “ but the authorities only laughed, and said the natives knew when

they were well off, and would give no more cause for anxiety. They looked upon it as a harmless pastime, and said it would help to keep them out of trouble—‘act as a safety valve’ was the expression they used, I think.”

“The mistake you made was in not stopping them yourself,” said the O.C. quietly. “You should have acted on your own initiative and ignored red-tapism. If the officials on the spot would act oftener, and tell those busy-bodies at home less, it would be better for the Empire. You’ll pardon my remarks, Austin, I hope.”

“I deserve them,” said Mr. Austin. “I admit I allowed myself to be too much swayed by red tape. I should have acted and accepted my dismissal. At the same time, it was not that altogether that influenced me.”

“Well, I’m afraid we haven’t time to go into that now”—turning to an officer who stood alongside—“Major Coope, send the C.M.R. off at once, and endeavour to overtake those Baphutis. The column will follow up as quickly as it can move off. I’ll go and see some of the others, so as to save time. And

Boyle"—turning once more to the signaller—"ask Sergeant Macnamara if he has any information about Percy Scott. And, by the way, Major Coope, see that those natives have no ambush prepared. Allan Maclean and his Fingoes had better skirmish ahead and on the flanks. Leave it to him—he knows what to do."

While Major Coope and one or two of the others moved quickly off to set the column in motion, the signaller again questioned Macnamara. But the reply came back almost immediately:

"No—news—about—Percy—Scott."

"I'm sorry for you, Austin," said the O.C., "but I'll give orders at once that the native levies and the others spread out as they advance and endeavour to find traces of your nephew. I'll also give orders about Cullum's body. There can be no talk about coming to terms with Morosi now. He and the Baphutis must be punished. Signal to Macnamara to come down at once, Boyle, and rejoin his troop. What do you intend doing, Mr. Austin, and your nephew here?"

“ We'll accompany you, sir, if we may. My nephew would like to be attached to the C.M.R.—he has already been with them, as you know—but under the circumstances, perhaps, it would be as well for him to be free until we pull into camp again. He, like myself, must endeavour to find out something about his cousin. I'm deeply indebted to you for the trouble you have taken, sir.”

“ Oh, that's all right, Austin; but just one thing more—can you tell me why those Baphutis didn't go to that fortified mountain right away after they burnt the Residency ? ”

“ Because, in the first place, they hardly had time to get there. In the second place, as I suspected, and said, they hadn't completed the building of the schanzes in the fortress—Morosi's Mountain as it is called. I suspect that in reality they've had a large number of natives there, working day and night while we've been waiting for an answer from them here. That is, I suspect, why they kept putting us off, and asking for more time.”

“ Humph ! Now I understand what Sergeant Macnamara meant by saying we'd require a

long ear-trumpet if we wanted to communicate with Morosi to-day. But that old villain shall pay for this. He has been working for it for a long time. I'll see you again, Austin. I'll do everything that lies in my power to find your nephew. Hope for the best. Au revoir!"

Within half-an-hour the camp was vacated, and the whole column was on its way to what was known as Morosi's Mountain or Black Man's Rock.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLACK MAN'S CASTLE

To say that the troops were astonished and angry when they thought about how they had been outwitted by the cunning Baphutis, would be to put it mildly. Regular troops, burghers, and yeomanry, pressed on, if possible to overtake the Baphutis before they got to their great fortress. It was a thousand pities that the British had not taken steps to occupy this mountain so as to prevent Morosi retiring to it. A comparatively few white men could have defended it against immense odds. But it is easy to be wise after an event.

The troops soon realised they had undertaken an impossible task. The road to the mountain—and it was hardly worth being called a road—was one of the roughest and most dangerous imaginable. For some distance it led along the great cliff which bordered the Orange River. In places precipices of more than five

hundred feet in depth yawned beneath them. They could see the great ice-cold river like a silver thread, churning its way far below. There were four or five big guns with the column, and it was only with considerable difficulty these could be got along at all. At times the horses had to be taken out of the traces and the guns hauled up by hand, dozens of men pulling on the draw-ropes. The same had to be done with the wagons and Cape carts. A large body of Fingoes scouted ahead with that spirited young soldier Allan Maclean, otherwise it might have been comparatively easy to have surprised the troops and have annihilated them on those precarious ledges, in some places overhung by still higher paths. But the Highlander did not simply go along the road the column was to take. He was not such a fool as to do a thing like that. He bade his men climb the heights and high ground above and beyond it, himself always in the lead. In one place he caught sight of a number of Baphutis, who had been stationed at a high point overlooking the track the column would take so as to roll down boulders upon it. Had these enemies

not been detected they would have swept men, horses, guns, and transport into the depths below, and, doubtless, themselves would have got off unscathed.

But young Allan Maclean—one of three brothers, by the way, who were all at that time fighting in South Africa, and sons of Colonel Maclean, one of the Governors of Natal—was one too many for those black men, cunning as they were. He in turn ambushed the ambushers. He meted out to them the fate that they were preparing for others. Unseen, with his Fingoes, on the still higher rocks, he at a given signal set in motion a regular avalanche of loose rocks on to the lurking Baphutis. It was a terrible sight to witness the panic and destruction that ensued. Jack, who was a friend of young Maclean's and had begged that young officer to help find out something about his cousin, was with him at the time, and a witness of the scene. It is worth describing.

The Baphutis in question, some thirty or forty in all, had not for a moment suspected that any white man would be sufficiently wide-

awake to dream of ascending those giddy heights above them, and must have been chuckling and congratulating themselves upon the master coup which they were about to deal the enemy, when the unexpected blow fell.

The first intimation was a huge rock which came careering down from the heights above, but fortunately bounded clear of them.

They looked up, but could see nothing. It surely was a narrow escape. But rocks would loosen at times with the frost and rains, and roll down into the valleys. They themselves had several rocks, situated at intervals, that they would launch upon their errand of destruction when the right time came. The British would think there was a land-slide in progress when they got directly beneath them.

"Now, Jack," said Allan Maclean, "put your shoulder to this rock, and when I give the word, push for all you are worth. Now, steady."

Jack held his breath. There were four Fingoes and a white non-commissioned officer close to him, prepared to dislodge the formid-

able boulder they were grouped behind. Jack watched the young Highlander and knew that he was making sure that his men stationed at the different points were prepared to annihilate the ambushers.

There was a period of silence and inaction that seemed an eternity. Then the young Highlander said :

“ I can see the first of the C.M.R. coming. They mustn't come too near. Now then, push ! ”

Next moment the boulder went crashing down, but, as has been said, bounded clear of the crouching Baphutis.

“ Bad shot, men,” observed Maclean calmly. “ Over with these smaller ones. Keep the ball rolling ! ”

A minute later formidable rocks were loosened and started rolling down the hill. They gathered strength and impetus until at last their powers of dealing destruction must have been terrific. They swept the lurking Baphutis from their ledge, and dashed them into the depths beneath. Maclean put a whistle to his lips, and sending a shrill blast gave the signal to the others.

In two minutes more it was as if an avalanche was sweeping that mountain-side.

“Now men, take your rifles, and pick off those that are making away.” And Maclean again set those who were with him the example.

Five minutes later Jack doubted if there was a Baphuti left amongst the ambushers to tell the tale of their outwittal and discomfiture. Maclean himself signalled a message to the advance guard of the C.M.R., acquainting them with the situation.

“Now, Jack, we must go on and see that there is no repetition of this sort of thing,” said Allan Maclean as coolly as if nothing had happened. “But this must be somewhat trying work for you. Wouldn’t you like to rejoin the C.M.R. and get your horse?”

“If you don’t mind me being with you, I’d much prefer going on with you,” was the reply. “It seems to me I’m more likely to be of use here than riding with the squadron down there. But I’m afraid, if Percy is alive he’s been taken on ahead with the main body of Baphutis.”

“Yes, I’m inclined to think he is a prisoner

with Morosi," said the handsome young officer in the decidedly shabby uniform. "If he had been killed his body would have been found, I fancy. Of course, none of us can tell, but somehow I think your cousin is all right."

Jack kept on with Maclean. Somehow this now famous young scout leader inspired hope and confidence. He had already established a reputation for moderation in an expression of opinion, and he generally went one better than he said.

It was a long and arduous day, but the cattle and horses were in good condition, and all had pushed on knowing that there would be a long rest to recoup at the end of their journey. Jack noted that Allan Maclean simply carried a pocketful of dried biltong—venison jerked or cured in the sun—and a cake or two of mealie bread. If he had occasion to stay out all night, or two or three nights, it would have been all the same to him. He seemed to thrive wonderfully on such simple fare. He was the very picture of health and strength. Jack noted that he carried his soft hat in a side pocket, and that he owned a head of hair that was better

calculated to do the work that Nature had intended it for than any hat.

Still that day, despite its excitement and novelty, was one of sorrow and apprehension to both Mr. Austin and Jack. What had become of Percy? That was ever the uppermost question in their minds. Had he been murdered like Cullum by the Baphutis, or was he being carried off as a prisoner to Morosi's Mountain by them? But the day passed, as all days must pass, and it was well on in the afternoon when the young scout leader paused at a place where the plateau they had been traversing sloped down towards the Orange River again. An unexpected and glorious prospect opened out in front of them.

Outside the mountain range, and on the edge of the dun-coloured and practically level plain or veldt, at a distance of a few miles, a great bold, towering rock rose high into the air. The eastern side took the form of a steep and inclined plane, which rose to a height of several hundred feet; on the flat top was a plateau of about a mile square. This rock was precipitous on three sides. It stood in the fork

between the Orange and Quithing rivers. The physical features of this great natural fortress for all the world resembled the rocks on which the castle of Edinburgh and that of Stirling stand. It was a majestic and imposing sight that stately eminence as it stood alone amid its far-stretching and noble surroundings. It stood out against a turquoise sky, cleanly cut and impressive. The waning sunlight rested on it tenderly, throwing its steep scarped sides into strong relief. And across its approach—the inclined plane—at regular intervals one could distinctly see great walls of rock—the schanzes built by the old potentate of military tastes and aspirations. Down the centre ran two cross schanzes or walls, so as to enfilade an enemy whichever way he might choose to approach. It looked as if Nature had meant this majestic rock for a great fortress when she had fashioned it. Morosi the chief at least must have thought so. Anyhow, for years he had striven to make it one, and while certain of the whites had looked on helplessly while he perfected his work, contenting themselves—as perchance they had to—with making repre-

sentations in high places, those in authority had simply said—and surely, very simply—that such amusement would serve the purpose of keeping Morosi out of mischief!

Allan Maclean had been intently looking at the fortified hill through his telescope when he suddenly said—

“I can just see a number of the Baphutis tailing in. Those that are already there are building up the lower schanzes for all they are worth. I hope none of our fellows will get too close. We’d better camp well out on the plain. There’s a ridge shaped like the cantle of a saddle that I think it would be well to seize and hold.”

“Would you like me to carry any message to the O.C.?” inquired Jack.

“Yes, I’d be obliged if you would,” said Maclean. “If you make down to that point he will be passing directly. You can give the message to one of his staff if you see he is engaged. I’m not quite sure but that there may be some Baphutis hidden between this and that lowest schanze, just to give us a little surprise—a last slap as it were.”

He quickly pencilled a note and gave it to Jack to deliver. He himself, with his men, went scouting ahead.

Jack did as ordered, and within twenty minutes had delivered the despatch to Colonel Bayley himself.

That officer turned to a galloper and told him to tell Lieutenant Maclean to ride on and seize the ridge that was called the Saddle, as without it we would afterwards be considerably handicapped in our operations on the face of Morosi's fortress. When the C.M.R. came up, that body would reinforce them.

It seemed a stupid thing to do to ask Fingoes—practically untrained troops, to face what might prove to be a strongly defended position, but it was done. Allan Maclean knew very well that unless he was alongside these Fingoes to urge them on with his presence and his revolver, they would scatter and retreat at a first volley. It was all very well for an O.C. to give such an order. The smartest soldier on parade, and the cleverest manœuvrer on Salisbury Plain often makes but a poor show when it comes to the real thing itself—the having

to use one's own initiative on the spur of the moment on a South African battle-field when dealing with a foe that only laughs at a drill book. What price then a headful of useless book theories and half-a-dozen yards of gold lace?

But Jack had made up his mind that he was not going to be left out of Maclean's advance after having been with him the greater part of the day. He made back for all he was worth to where he could see that young officer at the head of his Fingoes. Maclean had already got his orders, and was advancing as light-heartedly as if he was marching up Aderley Street in Cape Town after a long sojourn on the veldt.

"Hello!" he said when he caught sight of Jack. "Who gave you permission to come with us? Man alive, that ridge may be fairly swarming with niggers, and you may be shot! The one half of us are pretty sure to be wiped out anyhow. I've just sent a man back to suggest to the O.C. that a good shower of shrapnel on that same ridge as we advance would greatly facilitate our movements, not to

speak of getting rid of a considerable number of the enemy at the same time. Now then—" turning to his Fingoes and in the Kaffir language ordering them to extend in skirmishing order, while he explained to them what it was he expected them to do. " Make back, Jack, and good-bye for the present. There goes the bugle ordering the advance ! "

But Jack had no intention of going back. It was not as if Allan Maclean were actually his superior officer. In any case there was no question of disobedience, for such was the admiration he had conceived for the plucky and light-hearted Highlander, who understood those black men so thoroughly and handled them so tactfully and splendidly, that he would have considered it an honour to have served under him in any capacity. Besides, the Fingoes were now far in advance of the others, and Jack deemed it would have looked suspicious if he had been seen leaving the company just as the latter was advancing to attack.

Boom, boom, boom ! There was a wailing over their heads as the iron missiles hurtled through the air. The artillery was beginning

to play upon the ridge. But not a sign of life from it as yet.

The Fingoes had spread out, and running in a crouching position, and taking advantage of every piece of cover, they worked towards the ridge.

Jack kept some twenty paces or so to the right of and slightly behind Maclean, so that he could not be seen by that officer. The latter was now too busy to notice him. He was shouting orders to his white non-commissioned officers, and encouragement to the black men, who, to do them justice, were sincerely attached to their young chief, and tried to brace themselves up for what they must have known would prove a stern ordeal.

Then a crackle of rifle fire from the ridge, and tiny wool-like puffs of smoke rising lazily into the air to show where the enemy lay that had opened fire upon them.

Then the whistle of bullets over their heads or the dull *phut* alongside as leaden messengers burrowed in earth or sputtered on rocks.

A cheery call of encouragement to his men in the Fingo tongue, and Allan Maclean rallied

them to the attack. High over their heads hurtled the artillery fire, the crackle of musketry grew until something like a continuous roar, punctuated by hollow booms, was in progress. The big mortar of 1802 had been brought into action.

Jack found himself running for all he was worth to keep up with Maclean and his Fingoes. The bullets seemed to be whistling all around him. At times there had been a brief pause in the advance, as if the men had stopped to regain their wind or to reload, and to take momentary shelter behind a wave-like ridge on the veldt. But such pauses were only of the shortest duration. The sooner they gained the ridge where the enemy was, the less danger there would be.

When Jack had heard the first bullets whistling over his head he almost wished he had taken Allan Maclean's decidedly explicit advice, and turned back. For one brief moment he very nearly came to doing it, particularly when he saw a Fingo within a few paces of him spin round on one heel and fall dead, while his rifle fell with a clatter amongst the loose stones.

It was somewhat of a shock and a terrible thing to see a human being drop and lie all of a heap like a bundle of limp rags upon the ground, and to think that in the twinkling of an eye the spark of life had been snuffed out for ever.

Jack could hear the laughing voice of Allan Maclean encouraging his men, and could catch a glimpse of that young officer as, rifle in hand, he rallied the others to the attack, and he would take heart of courage again. Before many minutes he found himself trying to get a good shot at the enemy, and just as anxious to get at them as if there was no such thing as fatal lead to keep him back.

And now they were within a hundred yards of the ridge, and nerving themselves for the final dash. The guns had ceased firing, lest they might possibly do injury to the attackers, when there came the clatter and noise of men in the rear, and the Fingoes knew that the C.M.R. were hurrying up to support them.

It was Maclean who led the cheer, and Jack who ably seconded him. Three minutes later the Baphutis who had tried to hold the ridge were in full flight, with Allan Maclean and his

Fingoes at their heels. Such of them as escaped made for the great Rock, and there at least they were safe. Not all the force of the British durst go within five hundred yards of it. It was the Gibraltar of South Africa.

And so ended the first little fight betwixt the British and the Baphutis in front of Morosi's Mountain. But the latter still held the whip hand, and looking at that seemingly impregnable natural fortress, it appeared as if they would retain it.

CHAPTER IX

MOROSI AT BAY

WHEN Allan Maclean caught sight of Jack, who had somehow lost his hat and had not missed it, he regarded him with an odd mixture of severity and amusement, and remarked—

“You’re a headstrong fellow, Jack, and a thoughtless one! If you had come to grief, who do you think would have been blamed for it?”

“I owe you a humble apology,” said the now subdued lad, “but I couldn’t well go back with the others all looking on. It was easier to advance. Besides, why shouldn’t I?”

“Well, the thing’s done with anyhow, and you’ve had your baptism of fire. Remember another time, that it sometimes requires more moral courage—and is therefore a braver thing—to own oneself in the wrong, and to retreat from a position, than to be pig-headed and try to stick it out. But it would be folly to follow

those Baphutis up. They'd pot every one of us from the schanzes."

It was as he had said, the Baphutis from the first schanze began to fire upon them, and there was nothing for it but to return.

"If the O.C. is wise," said Maclean, "he'll build a little round-house on the Saddle. That will command the approach to the Rock. I think that with my men—tired as they are, I'll start in and commence one. It will be dark in another half-hour—the daylight is passing now. Perhaps the Baphutis won't guess our purpose, and will leave us alone."

It came somewhat as a surprise to Jack to see this young fighter suddenly turn himself into a tactician and an engineer. He had instinctively seen and grasped the strategic importance of Saddle Rock, which was within fire of the enemy, and he did not wait for orders to build a round-house that might come too late. He started in to build one right away.

Jack took off his serge and hastened to help, tired as he was. He was anxious to make amends for the late liberty he had taken. He helped his leader to peg out the base of the

conical tower, and being big and strong for his age, assisted in moving some of the larger stones into position. A lever had been sent for to the Cape carts, and every one was busy. It was a significant thing to note how those black men, who must have been already pretty well played out, worked for their leader. The latter had taken his serge off, and was working as hard as any navvy. He had the head of a builder, and knew exactly how to place and fit stones so that the absence of mortar would not matter much. And all the time the enemy kept sniping them at long range, so that the work was by no means unattended with danger. At last Colonel Bayley, seeing and recognising the value of the young Fingo leader's efforts, promptly sent a squadron of C.M.R. to his assistance, and with their help the foundation of a spacious round-house was begun. The O.C. sent a message to Maclean to say that as he intended to post a company of C.M.R.'s at Saddle Rock, it would not be necessary for him to remain there, but he would be very much obliged if he could give them the benefit of his advice in its construction.

Jack thought it was asking a good deal of a young officer, who had done more than his share in the day's work, to undertake that which another man would probably profit by. But again Maclean was an object lesson to him. He remained with his Fingoes, with the result that within a couple of hours a substantial round-house, six feet high and with loop-holes, was run up, with open wings on either side as well. This point of vantage afterwards proved invaluable. Of course it could not be considered by any means completed, but that could be done afterwards. A company or guard of the C.M.R. was afterwards always stationed there, and relieving the guard became one of the exciting incidents of the day, when the Baphutis opened fire on them. But as the hour of posting the relief was generally changed, as well as the way in which it was done, the risks were minimised.

When Jack returned to where the C.M.R. were camped he found his uncle, Mr. Austin, there. The latter was somewhat dejected, but not altogether without hope regarding the missing Percy.

“Colonel Bayley has been most kind,” he explained. “All the troops have had orders to look out for Percy and search for signs of him, but nothing whatever has been discovered. Either Percy had to run for it, and managed to get clear away, in which case he is pretty certain to turn up later, or he has been taken up by the Baphutis into Morosi’s Mountain. If so, we can only hope that they will have some mercy on the boy, whom they undoubtedly all at one time liked. But a Basuto in time of peace, and a Basuto on the war-path, are two very different people.”

“I feel certain, Uncle, that Percy is safe,” said Jack. “Had they caught me it might have been a different thing. But you know how they always took to him. He was never in the slightest degree afraid of them; I suppose he showed that he trusted them. He seemed to understand their way of looking at things and their motives in a fashion I never could. I wouldn’t wonder if they thought he was a white boy who had been born with the spirit of some black warrior.”

“That’s a fantastic theory, Jack, but it’s

true that some savages—the Australian blacks, for instance—believe in it, and I sincerely hope for Percy's sake that they may continue to think so. So long as they don't wreak any sort of revenge upon him, it will be all right. But, of course, we've no means of knowing if he's really on that Rock."

"I think you'll find he's all right, Uncle. If he's not a prisoner, he has managed to clear right away. Percy was a wonderful fellow to keep his head when he was in a tight fix."

"Well, as I've said before, we must hope for the best, and use every means that lies in our power to discover what has become of him. Colonel Bayley is helping us all he can, and Allan Maclean is a wonderful fellow at finding out things. I never met a man with keener perceptive faculties—the Highlander's second sight, I suppose."

"Do you think Morosi will soon give in, sir?"

"I'm afraid not. I have had information that for a long time he has been provisioning that mountain. I daresay the people at home will say, why didn't we hear of it? But they

forget that while an Englishman works so that all the world can see not only what he is doing but what he intends to do, a black man always moves secretly—and he is right in doing so. If a black man was even suspected of giving such a secret away, he would die very suddenly indeed. We, I'm very sorry to say, too often listen to all sorts of sentimental and Quixotic excuses on behalf of a traitor."

Jack thought that recent events had somewhat embittered his uncle, but then he knew how Mr. Austin had lately been badgered and handicapped by all sorts of restrictions, which were not only absurd but actually incentive to rebellion, so he remained silent.

There were now several hundred men camped in the form of a semicircle before Morosi's Mountain. They were just out of rifle range of the enemy, with the exception of the round-house on Saddle Rock. The staff had been kept busy marking out the different camps, and it was a striking and picturesque sight to behold the great crescent of camp fires—innumerable points of light in the gloom—stretched out in front of the great black bulk of the

mountain. It was now the month of April and the nights were getting cold.

It was thought not unlikely that the Baphutis, naturally concluding that the troops would be tired, might attempt an attack that night, but nothing happened. Next morning, when it grew light, Morosi's Mountain seemed to loom up blacker and grimmer than ever. It was quite obvious that the black people had been building up their schanzes and strengthening their position during the night. The Baphutis were called upon to surrender, but sent back an insulting reply. No answer whatever was vouchsafed to the questions regarding Percy Scott. The next week or so was spent in observing the position, and trying to determine how the enemy was situated in regard to supplies. If they were not properly prepared for a siege it would be foolish to sacrifice human lives in a premature and unnecessary attack. But the inaction was resented by the Yeomanry, whose time was valuable, and on 8th April an attempt was made by them to rush the first schanze when they thought the Baphutis would least expect it. But the assault proved disas-

trous, and the British lost twenty men killed and wounded.

This was a terrible slap in the face to the attacking troops, and in July another attack was planned and organised, this time by a certain Commandant who shall be nameless. On the day previous to the attack, Sergeant Scott of the Artillery, a cousin of our two heroes, with seven men volunteered to creep up at night and throw shells with lighted fuses over the schanzes so as to drive out the enemy's sharp-shooters, and thus prepare the way for a general attack. Jack begged hard to be one of the seven, but, naturally, he was not permitted.

It was an exciting and impressive experience, that creeping stealthily up in the darkness and lying down under the very walls behind which lurked the enemy. It was resolved that the hand shells or bombs would not be thrown until the darkness had lifted sufficiently to enable the attacking party to see what they were doing. Sergeant Scott and his men managed to creep up and take their positions without being discovered. The night being

dark favoured their purpose. The Baphutis were either asleep or did not hear them.

But the attack was bungled. At the first streaks of dawn Sergeant Scott lighted his fuse and threw his bomb over the first schanze. This was to be the signal for the supports and attackers to rush up, but as yet the latter seemed to be a long way off. The others lighted and began throwing over their shells. They burst with an ominous din behind the schanzas, and must have cleared the then sleepy sharpshooters out in pretty quick time. Unfortunately for Sergeant Scott, a shell burst in his hand, shattering it, with the result that he was dreadfully handicapped. Still he did not throw up the sponge. He pluckily encouraged those who were with him to continue their efforts, with the assurance that the supports would be up immediately.

The scene on the Rock was now animated in the extreme. The Baphutis showed on it like an angry swarm of bees that had been disturbed. The trenches were manned, and a heavy fire poured into the advancing troops. And the supports arrived too late! Some of

the C.M.R. managed to get over the first schanze and drive the enemy from it, but the Baphutis soon drove them back again. In less than twenty minutes it was obvious the attack had failed. Those who had passed the first schanze were now endeavouring to save themselves as best they could. The result of the attack was a heart-breaking and ignominious failure. Thirty-four men were killed and wounded, and shortly afterwards a human head appeared hoisted on a pole over the middle schanze. Needless to say the sight of it carried dismay into the British camp. It was something that was remembered against the enemy.

But the discomfiture of the British did not end here. A sortie was made one night by the Baphutis on the Yeomanry camp near the junction of the Quithing and Orange rivers, with the result that seventeen men were killed on the spot. The despised Baphutis were exacting a heavy toll from those whose efforts had been handicapped by the sentimentalists at home urging pacification and forbearance—a thing that black people naturally

interpret as a sign of fear, and a foolish attempt to hoodwink them.

Winter was now coming on, and horse sickness made itself felt in the British camp. It was quite evident that Morosi's Mountain was well supplied with food, and that the besieged garrison had no intention of surrendering. Morosi declined to discuss terms of surrender with the besiegers. Neither would he state whether any white prisoners were on the Rock or not. What the British had to do, he said, was to clear out of the country. They were not going to take that Rock if they remained in front of it for ten years. The now dispirited men who looked up at the greatly strengthened and heightened schanzes, which rose tier above tier on the steep slope, thought it was more than likely Morosi was justified in what he said. A large number of the troops were obliged to leave, but it was resolved that in the spring a fresh and determined effort should be made to take the Rock.

And in the meantime there were certain of the besiegers who had determined on a plan to capture the Mountain. The Circumlocution

Office and Red Tape Department was not unduly worried regarding these preparations. The Artillery was ordered to Ibeka to refit, only two guns and a company in charge of an officer were left in front of the Mountain. Dummy guns, made from logs of wood, were mounted at the pits in order to deceive the enemy. In the evening numerous camp fires were lighted so as to lead them to believe that the full complement of men was still there waiting for them. At Aliwal scaling ladders were being constructed to put into execution a scheme that some daring spirits—Allan Maclean, certain officers of the C.M.R., Mr. Austin, who could not leave the neighbourhood of the Rock while he thought there was a possibility of Percy being still alive, and one or two others, had conceived.

But while these preparations were going on, certain individuals remained before the mountain who were doing a little scouting on their own account. Sergeant Macnamara had got it into his head that there was a certain break in the great Rock by which Morosi managed to keep up communication with other tribes in Basutoland, and that while apparently isolated

and unable to get certain necessities of life, he was frequently in communication with the outside world. That some of Morosi's followers frequently ran the blockade unsuspected Macnamara was sure of. This opinion was also shared by Allan Maclean, but as he had been ordered to await developments, and not to move his men from certain ground commanding the approach to the Rock, he contented himself with certain occasional solitary midnight excursions. Of course he was handicapped by the darkness, as then it was impossible to detect spoor or tracks; while it was impossible to go anywhere near the Rock during the day, as he would then have been at the mercy of the enemy's sharp-shooters.

It was about this time that Macnamara had a little adventure, which was of such a startling nature that it is necessary to open up a fresh chapter in order to do it justice.

CHAPTER X

SERGEANT MACNAMARA HAS AN ADVENTURE

THERE were two things that Sergeant Terence Macnamara particularly desired; one of them was to win the V.C., and the other to have a *tête-à-tête* with either of his pet aversions, Masepuli or Dodo, or both of them if possible. They had both served him scurvy tricks in the past, and he longed to square accounts. He would take jolly good care they would not outwit him again.

He took to prowling about in the neighbourhood of the great Rock at night, beyond the outposts, when there was little or no moon, for he had an idea that, by some means or other, the Baphutis managed to descend at night, and have communication with another tribe of the Basutos that was not openly in revolt but had sympathy with them. He had not spoken to his superior officers regarding this, as, in the past, some of his theories and plans had not

only been disregarded, but openly laughed at. As Jack and he had seen a good deal of each other during the siege, and as he knew the lad was anxious to get some news from the Rock concerning his cousin, he at last took him into his confidence and acquainted him with his plans. Jack had seen him preparing to leave camp one night, and asked him where he intended going.

“Wheesht!” said the Irishman. “It’s to take tay wid that shpalpeen Dodo or Masepuli I’m afther. Didn’t ye hear that wan o’ them had been seen more than once at certain places in the neighbourhood.”

Jack only kept himself from smiling with difficulty.

“Yes,” he replied. “Most of us have heard how both Masepuli and Dodo have been seen at Mafeteng or Maseru more than once, but it seems an absurd story on the face of it. How could they leave the Rock, and if they did manage to do that, why should they wish to go back to it again?”

“It’s to find out where them dhivils are leavin’ the Rock, if they are leavin’ the Rock,

that I'm going round it at night, shure," explained Macnamara. "As for why they should want to return to it, isn't it the safest place for them? They might be recognised and caught if they remained outside; besides, they'd be in danger of some of their own people giving them away. At the same time, it isn't likely young sparks like Dodo, and Masepuli, and Letuka are going to remain cooped up in a hen-roost like the one up there. Shure, and haven't they a reputation to live up to, and won't it be a feather in their caps when they show them others where they've been, and lets 'em know what's goin' on outside?"

"That's quite a novel and startling theory of yours, Macnamara, but of course I know that sort of thing has been done over and over again by people in a besieged garrison in war time. Besides, there are too few of us to keep a watch all round the Rock—we'd require ten times the number of men to do that. Indeed, we want to keep well together these days in case of an attack. Still I fail to see where exactly they can get down and out. I'd like to have a prowl around with you. Let me come. I'd like to

catch a Baphuti so as to get some news of Percy."

Sergeant Macnamara at first declined to take Jack with him, but at last consented on the distinct understanding that he was to do exactly as he was told, and was to undertake no unnecessary risks on his own initiative.

"Git yer revolver and come then," said Macnamara, "and dhivil a word to any one, I'm tellin' ye."

It was about nine o'clock in the evening when they started out. The night was mild, and the moon was in her first quarter. It, with the starlight, enabled them to see some thirty or forty yards ahead. There were, however, some fleecy clouds in the sky, so that every now and again the light would be temporarily obscured.

They passed the outposts of the British camp on the right or river side of the Rock, the great bulk of which loomed up above them like the South African Gibraltar that it was. In places they had to hug the Rock owing to the river skirting its base so closely, but every now and again they would come to an open space or timbered flat where they could travel more

easily. But the Rock did not always present a sheer unbroken front. There were kloofs or cracks in it which sloped upwards, encouraging the idea that should a man be a good climber it might be possible to ascend to some considerable height, indeed, that he might even be able to gain the top. But that was only the impression one got from the foot of the cliff. What with overhanging rocks and loose stones it was more than likely the feat would prove to be a quite impossible one. There was one place that attracted Jack's attention in particular. It was a huge chasm in the Rock. For forty feet or so the sides were almost perpendicular. If it could be possible to surmount it by means of scaling ladders, he thought the rest of the ascent presented no particular difficulties. Still he knew that across such places on the Rock above the defenders had built stone walls and schanzes which it was extremely unlikely would be ever left unwatched.

They must have travelled a mile or more when they came to a clump of timber in a species of little peninsula. The deep cold waters of the Quithing River gleamed on their right.

There seemed what might be a ford or drift here in the dry weather, for innumerable stones or pointed rocks showed up above the surface, churning the water as it rushed past. Still there was little or no sound from the river, and one could hear the baboons barking and chattering in the kloof as they pursued their nocturnal quest for food amongst the rocks and roots.

They had spoken but little as they walked on as quickly as the circumstances permitted. Voices might carry in a fashion to surprise one in such a place. Wherever possible they had kept as much as they could in shadow lest they should be seen from some point of vantage on the Rock above. If they were detected, and had to run for it, they might come in for a regular fusilade from the black sentries on the heights, and that would most likely lead to awkward consequences. There was now not a breath of air stirring. A heavy acrid odour as of rank herbage hung about. The suggestive lurking shadows the squat gnarled trees threw, were sinister and calculated to startle one at times by their half-human semblance. It was an un-

wholesome, uncanny place, and by no means calculated to inspire one with either courage or cheerful thoughts.

“Jack,” said Macnamara, “I can see what looks like the mouth of a kloof over there. You can see how the top av the rock shlants back from it, so I’m thinking it must be quite a long kloof. Now, I’d like to have just a peep into it, so if you stop at the entrance, I’ll go up and have a look around. Ye see it would not do for us both to go up at one time. It’s sentry-go one av us must be doin’.”

“All right, but don’t get stopping away too long,” said Jack. “Do you notice how the ground is trodden quite bare, and even the bark is worn off the trees here. It seems to me as if this was the head-quarters of the baboon world. I wonder what they’re up to in that kloof?”

But Macnamara, contrary to his wont, had no explanation to offer. There was something weird and disquieting about that rising and falling chatter of baboon voices. The Irishman had no doubt whatever that they were discussing some knotty point amongst themselves,

and that there was considerable difference of opinion. That monkeys, particularly baboons, could talk when they chose, Macnamara had no doubt. They were cunning enough to hide this fact from human beings for fear of being pressed into captivity, and made use of in a way they would not at all appreciate. He had a peculiar dislike to baboons. There was something so impish yet half-human about them! He was sorry he had not asked Jack to accompany him. By the time he got to the narrow entrance of the chasm he was nearly turning back to inform his young friend that there would be no necessity to watch outside, so he might as well come with him. But he knew that the lad was fairly shrewd, and suspecting the real reason might poke fun at him. That would never do. He must go through with the thing by himself. If he had been certain of only meeting with human beings as enemies, he would even have entered that gap with considerable alacrity, for he feared no man, white or black, and, in point of fact, rather enjoyed a fight. But suggestive and sinister baboons were different. They were more than semi-human, and cleverly concealed

their real natures for dark purposes. He had often thought that if they only combined and acted together, it would be a very unlucky business for the unfortunate human being whom they got into their clutches. Indeed, he had affected to laugh at the weird stories he had at times heard of baboons stealing the children of white people, and rearing them in their fearsome abodes. He had also heard of how they had even captured human beings who had particularly incurred their displeasure, with what results, of course, it was never known, seeing they never came back alive. By this time Terence was feeling decidedly queer. Unless he rallied himself he was in for a bad time.

“Bedad!” he exclaimed, “and to think that the son av me father should be mindin’ a parcel av monkeys! Bad luck to thim! I’m going up that kloof. An’ it’s sorry for themselves they’ll be if they get foolin’ round a gintleman.”

Forgetful of where he was he even tried to whistle. Throwing his chest out, he advanced up the narrow gulch. It had some curious turns in it, and there was sand under his feet.

He was wondering where the baboons were, when suddenly he came to a place where the passage opened out, and he saw a sight that for the moment gave him, as he afterwards described it, quite a turn. Just sufficient moonlight filtered in from above to enable him to distinguish the different figures with tolerable distinctness. Macnamara to this day is ready to swear to the truth of the story. The reader must form his or her own opinion as to whether it is in its entirety worthy of credence, or if Macnamara at the time, perhaps, allowed his imagination to somewhat distort what he actually did see and hear.

In the centre of a ring of baboons stood one that was evidently on its trial. Also in the ring, but at a discreet distance, stood another that was evidently the accuser of the arraigned one. Macnamara could only speculate as to what the trouble had been. It was quite evident, however, that it was of a serious nature, for the prisoner bore traces of having been roughly handled. That there had been a considerable struggle before he was put in the dock was patent, and now he stood blinking and looking

furtively around as if he were meditating some plan of escape. There was an anxious look in his eyes, although he was trying to carry himself as if he was not expecting any serious outcome from the proceedings. He was a big baboon—quite the biggest there, but his fellows seemed to have combined against him, determined on bringing him to book. He might have thrashed any two or even three of them, but the whole lot of them together and at one time was too big a contract.

There was a grey-haired baboon which was evidently crown prosecutor, and he, indicating the accused with clenched fists, seemed reeling off a list of his iniquities. No one interrupted save the accused himself, who every now and again shook his head violently, and uttered sounds obviously of denial and dissent.

But the most extraordinary feature of the trial was that three or four baboons situated in the immediate neighbourhood of the accused carried sticks in their hands, so that when the prisoner showed a disposition to answer too freely or to back away, they raised their sticks threateningly so as to enjoin order. Then

the grey-haired baboon who was putting the prisoner through his facings, turned to some one outside the ring of baboons, and uttered some peculiar sounds which to Macnamara were, of course, unintelligible. Next moment a small ape, obviously terrified within an inch of its life, and exhibiting every sign of extreme shyness, was thrust into the circle. It quickly got as far away from the accused as it was possible under the circumstances, and watched him out of the corners of its eyes in a manner that left no doubt as to its opinion regarding the big baboon.

It in turn told some broken, halting story which, however, seemed to carry weight, judging by the angry clicks and looks turned on the accused by the circle or grand jury of baboons.

The crown prosecutor then put a question to the little ape. The prisoner by its restless action seemed to dissent from any such question being asked, but the baboons with the sticks becoming demonstrative, silenced the objector. Then the little ape produced its evidence—*so much of its tail as was left!* There it was

in all its ugly nakedness ! There was no getting away from facts ! It pointed at the big baboon, who with outstretched hands and head moving rapidly from one side to the other, seemed demonstrating the utter impossibility of his ever having committed such an outrage.

But he did not somehow look like a truthful baboon, and there was the tail that had been broken in two !

Then arose such a chattering and clicking, such a genuine outburst of indignation, that for a moment or two Macnamara fully expected summary justice would be meted out to the criminal. The circle of baboons showed their teeth and made faces at the accused. Those who wielded the sticks seemed to have the utmost difficulty in restraining themselves. They raised their weapons and brought them down to within an inch or two of the prisoner's head and shoulders. As for the latter, he now seemed very badly scared indeed. He seemed to have given up denying the matter, and to be wondering if it was at all possible to make a bolt for it.

As for Macnamara, he had become so inte-

rested in the proceedings that his superstitious fear had almost completely left him. The little ape with its decapitated tail had won his sympathies. He had quite forgotten all about Jack and the mission on which he was engaged. Moreover, he divined that the big baboon was only one of those specious, swaggering bullies that are really cowards at heart, and that it was only now that the others had risen in revolt and brought him to book. So intent were they upon this, the long-desired trial of the malefactor, that they had not detected the human presence. Macnamara hoped they would take no notice of him. The proceedings after all seemed so natural and in order, that the law of association caused him to overlook the fact that they were only baboons. He not only did not wish that his presence there should interfere with the course of justice, but he was seized with a desire to let them know that he quite approved of the punishing of the accused. Carried away by his feelings, he was about to shout some words of approval when a sudden cessation of the chatter apprised him of the fact that the trial had not yet reached an end.

The grey-haired monkey had beaten two sticks violently together, commanding silence. The hulking accused appeared to be clearing his throat, and taking a quite unnecessary time to do so. It was evident he was to be allowed to make a statement on his own behalf before sentence was pronounced.

He was indeed a specious baboon. The look of injured innocence he managed to conjure up, and his never-failing flow of language, was indeed admirable. Any baboon who was a stranger to him might have been justified in imagining the accused defending himself on the ground of some high-souled principle. He resembled a criminal alien trying to convince a jury that he was an honest patriotic citizen. He even tried to turn public opinion against the miserable little ape who had lost its tail. Indeed, so plausible and convincing seemed the pleader's remarks that the little ape tried to sit down but could not, and began to whimper instead just like a human being. It seemed to regret that it had mentioned the loss of its tail at all. And then, obviously without any premeditation, it rose to its full height and turned

round slowly as if looking for something—doubtless the tail which was no longer there. For the first time the jury got a good and exceptional view of the injury.

There was no getting away from facts—talk as the big baboon liked. The crown prosecutor clicked something. The venerable-looking baboon appeared to be supplementing the condemnation and pronouncing judgment. There was a chattering and hissing chorus of approval. At last tardy justice was about to be meted out to the offender.

When Macnamara afterwards thought about it, he wondered why that tribunal of baboons could have been so stupid. Before they could close upon their victim, the big baboon, who had simulated collapse, sprang to his feet, made a sudden dart at the little ape, who had been the innocent cause of all his trouble, knocked it head over heels with a blow from a clenched fist, and then leaped right over the heads of the ring of spectators, or to be more correct, the representative jury that had been sitting in judgment. Macnamara afterwards affirmed that he actually used the shoulders

of the presiding judge of the court as a species of stepping-stone or spring-board.

“Bad luck t’ye ye, villain!” cried Macnamara, who, apprehensive of the escape of the culprit, had darted forward from his place of concealment so as to cut off his retreat.

But, unfortunately for the Irishman, he quite overlooked the fact that he was yet in shadow, and that the fleeing baboon could not see him. The result was that the great ape cannoned into the man with a force that sent the latter flat on his back. But Macnamara had caught the ape by the throat, and by a superhuman effort managed to fling it in front of him. Next moment there was an uproar that must have been heard a mile away. Heedless of the presence of the human being—if indeed they thought about him at all in the scrimmage—they piled on to the big baboon who had endeavoured to escape, and lugged him screaming and vociferating up the gully. There was no mistaking what they intended doing with him. His last hour had come.

Macnamara was rising painfully to his feet, trying to recover his wind, when Jack came

running up to ascertain what was happening. He had fully believed that his friend was being set upon and killed by the entire baboon world. His relief was great when he saw that Macnamara was comparatively unhurt.

“ I think we'd better make haste out of this,” exclaimed Jack. “ They'll hear this row from the Rock, and perhaps may send a volley down into us.”

The words were hardly out of his mouth when what he apprehended happened. There was a sharp report from the Rock high over their heads, and a bullet struck the ground close to them. Still, it did not seem to have much effect upon the baboons, who could be heard up the kloof continuing their raucous din. Two or three shots followed quickly, and the apes, doubtless apprehensive of interference in their scheme of justice, seemed determined to hurry up the impending execution right away. There was the hollow sound of blows, and a series of agonised shrieks. A pause, then another wild outbreak which suggested that the big baboon was making a last frantic struggle for life. Then screams that must

have been heard by the British camp as well as the Baphutis on the Rock, a series of ominous hollow thuds, and a chorus of barks and yelps of satisfaction as the executioners scattered and scampered off, happy in the thought that the big baboon's career of iniquity was at an end.

“Don't you think we'd better get out of this, Sergeant?” said Jack. “They'll see us from the Rock, and shoot at us if we don't?”

“Shure, and it might be as well,” was the reply. “Didn't I say that them baboons could talk and act just like oursilves? Yes, and it's going I think we'll be. We can keep in the shadow of the Rock till we can get out of this, and then strike out to camp. Aisy, lad, aisy, that ould baboon had a dhivil av a hard head, and it has interfered with my digestion.”

CHAPTER XI

MACNAMARA INDULGES IN A BRIEF NAP

It was only with considerable difficulty that Jack and Macnamara managed to get back to camp without being either shot by the Baphutis on the Rock or attracting the attention of the British sentries. As they realised that the whole camp must have been alarmed, and, doubtless, the men ordered to stand to arms, this would make it awkward for them when they came to explain their absence. They knew very well how the disturbed ones would bless them when they found out how they had been robbed of part of their night's sleep for nothing. To steal into camp without attracting attention was therefore the discreet thing to do under the circumstances.

This they successfully accomplished.

To revert to the late fusillade, it is remarkable how a stray and unintentional shot fired by a nervous and imaginative sentry will start two

opposing armies firing at each other in the dark, though widely apart at the time, and each without any immediate intention of making an attack upon the other. Panic, of course, accounts for this. So it was with the shot fired by a thoughtless Baphuti at the baboons under the Rock. The black sentries had doubtless heard such an outburst of feeling before amongst the baboons, and had a good guess as to its origin, but once the alarm had spread the real reason for it became, of course, a mere matter of speculation, with the result that for the rest of the night both British and Baphutis stood to their arms. They kept peering into the gloom, waiting for the enemy that never came. Of course Macnamara had sworn Jack to silence, otherwise their lot next day would have been very unhappy indeed.

As for Macnamara, the first thing he did on rejoining his troop was to express the opinion that it was some timid Baphuti sentry who had fired at baboons in mistake for human beings, and nothing more. But his officers doubled the sentries all the same. He speedily got a fire under weigh in the cooking pit dug

for the purpose, and made a large canful of coffee. Jack and he then partook of it, enjoying it thoroughly. There is nothing in the world so permanently refreshing as a good drink of tea or coffee when mind or body are fatigued. This holds good under all conditions, in either a hot climate or a cold one.

A little later the sleepy men were allowed to lie down, when they slept well into daylight. There was no particular reason for very early rising just then. These days of comparative inaction were quite long enough as it was.

When Jack awoke the sun was high in the heavens, and the great Rock rose up before his eyes grim and forbidding as ever with its lines of schanzes frowning down on them uncompromisingly. The longer the British looked at that Rock the more formidable and hopeless their task of capturing it appeared. From where they lay they could only see to the top of the inclined plane, crossed and recrossed by those well-built walls or schanzes of stone. The large flat on top of the mountain they could not see, of course, at all, but the British knew that up there were two or three springs of water

and numerous well-built huts or houses of stone. When the bulk of the troops returned in the spring with proper shells for the stout mortar of 1802, and artillery with which they would be able to drop shot and shrapnel on to the defiant garrison, it would surely only be a question of a very little time before Morosi and his stubborn followers were brought to a state of subjection. But they would be well peppered before that happened. A certain class of sentimentalists at home would not be allowed to interfere and encourage them in revolt by granting concessions which they could only interpret as signs of weakness and fear. In a few weeks winter would be at an end, and surely the stores of the besieged garrison must be very nearly gone. It was known that they had all kinds of cattle on top, but the fodder for the same would be getting short. And when the shrapnel began to fall amongst and kill the cattle, Morosi's camp would be anything but a salubrious place in which to reside.

To Mr. Austin and Jack the all-important question was what had become of Percy. Since the night on which he had disappeared nothing

had been seen or heard of him. Had the British managed to capture a Baphuti prisoner it might have been possible to obtain news, but not a Baphuti had been secured. Neither would Morosi grant a parley or hold any communication with the besieging force. A fight was a fight, he said, and doubtless so far as this was concerned, he was right. Neither had any of the opposing sentries on the outposts held any communication with one another. Had Morosi heard of any such unauthorised meeting taking place, the head or heads of his guilty soldiers would within a very short time indeed have decorated the schanzes, stuck on tops of poles. His methods, like those of the Zulu Napoleon Tshaka, were drastic and conclusive.

It would have been monotonous work camped in front of that Rock had not many little hunting trips and amusements been organised. There was even football and cricket, and it must have sometimes considerably puzzled the besieged Baphutis to see the enemy obviously enjoying themselves like so many schoolboys, under their very noses, and almost within range. But in South African warfare such things have often

happened. In the late Boer war, for instance, it was no uncommon thing for soldiers to enjoy a cricket match within sight of the enemy. And the moral effect of thus for a time ceasing to think of the menacing danger, was undeniably beneficial. Apart from his never altogether absent concern regarding the fate of his cousin, Jack had by no means a dull time. In Sergeant Macnamara he always found a willing and amusing companion when he wanted to take a little trip beyond the outposts. Much game and venison, not to speak of many enjoyable hours, was frequently the result. Allan Maclean with his Fingoes was temporarily absent, but it was only a question of ten days or so now before he would return.

In order to demoralise and wear out the enemy, the artillery would at unexpected times open fire and make a breach in one of the enemy's schanzes, but it was wonderful how quickly the Baphutis concentrated and built such gaps up again.

At frequent intervals Sergeant Macnamara made solitary reconnoitring expeditions on his own account. He felt convinced that somehow

the Baphutis on the besieged Rock held communication with certain of the neighbouring tribes, and that, moreover, they not infrequently managed to get supplies also. At uncertain times a patrol of the Rock was made, but necessarily out of gunshot of it, but the British had not sufficient men to post pickets round the Rock in such a manner as would deter blockade-runners. Macnamara knew that if any men left the Rock to wander afield, Dodo or Masepuli were these men. The knowledge of this fact was, doubtless, the great incentive to the Irishman's secret peregrinations. He would now and again stay out all night, but still his want of success hitherto did not seem to damp his ardour. Some day, he told himself, he would meet with either Dodo, or Masepuli, or Letuka, and then he would "take tay wid them." That would be a picnic indeed.

One fine morning Macnamara had got permission to be absent from camp for twenty-four hours, as it was unlikely the Baphutis would make any sortie. Moreover, the British had in the meantime so strengthened their position that they would have been compara-

tively safe against any attack. It was a waiting game that was being played now. There were times when Macnamara preferred going out alone, and the present occasion was one of them.

The sun was well up when the Irishman started. He was on foot, and left the camp on the side furthest from the great Rock, but when he got out of sight of both he turned sharp round to the left, and made for the low ground by the river. This he succeeded in crossing by means of a raft, the timber for which he had hidden there on a former occasion with an eye to a little expedition such as this. By means of a few logs and a stout pole Macnamara would have had the temerity to face the Niagara River above the whirlpool. The stream safely negotiated, he took the raft to pieces, and hid the timber under the high bank so as to make sure of it should he return that way.

“ Bedad, and it’s a foine day for a gintleman to be taking a walk ! ” he said as he strode along, his rifle over his shoulder.

He made for the mountains, and his spirits rose as he left the deserted Kaffir huts and

neglected mealie fields behind. The sky was a glorious blue, and a light breeze tempered the now fairly warm rays of the sun. The spirit of the African spring was in the air; there was a tender green shining through the brown of last season's growth. His eyes wandered far afield. He noted the aasvogels or giant buzzards sitting on the edge of the crags, surveying the surrounding country or flying high and lazily over Morosi's Rock. He could see several descending upon it.

"Ah!" said Macnamara aloud. "Shure, and it's their cattle must be dying up there, and dying so fast that they haven't time to chuck them over the Rock. Them birds are the scavengers av the veldt."

He surmounted a hill, dropping down into a valley which seemed to bear round to the west, and which he knew would gradually lead him to the north side or precipitous end of Morosi's Mountain—a direction which he knew any blockade-runners would be likely to take. But how these same blockade-runners managed to get up and down the great Rock was somewhat of a puzzle to the Irishman. It must have

been done by means of a long rope—a somewhat risky business and arguing good climbing powers—but by whatever means they managed to do it, it argued considerable skill and daring on the part of the performers.

For two or three hours Macnamara plodded steadily onwards. He gave the deserted Kaffir kraals a wide berth, as he did not know whom they might be sheltering. He skirted the untilled fields—their owners might or might not come back to them—and he went out of his way to avoid a pretty spot where stood a little church, a store, and a blacksmith's shop. In peace time that little speck of civilisation must have presented a striking contrast to the solitary grandeur and wildness of these South African highlands.

About noon Macnamara reckoned that he was at a point nearly due north of Morosi's Mountain and about ten miles from camp. He stood in a narrow valley with scarped sides, and with a running stream churning through it. The day was hot, and as it was now about noon, Macnamara thought he would camp on what seemed quite a pretty spot shaded by drooping acacia

trees and overlooking a sloping stretch of rock overhanging quite an imposing waterfall. Beneath, at a depth of some twenty or thirty feet, was a foam-flecked pool. Here the stream contracted and entered a species of inaccessible cañon, where it hurried on at a great rate.

Macnamara looked around. This spot commanded a native track or pad which possibly led from the neighbourhood of Morosi's Mountain to a certain Basuto township some several miles farther on. The natives belonging to it had not risen in rebellion against the British, although it was quite possible they were in sympathy with the Baphutis. If any one came along that path he could not fail to see them. He would keep his eye on the little gap on the side of the hill through which it led, and he could not fail to see any one approach. If any one did, then it was in all likelihood some one who was running the blockade from Morosi's stronghold. There was no need to fear other Basutos who were not in an open state of rebellion. The British troops who had just settled the Zulu business in Natal, with Sir Evelyn Wood and Buller amongst them, could easily

cross the border, and with their large well-organised forces speedily quieten them.

Before many minutes the Irishman's quart pot had boiled, and his coffee was made. He took the jerked venison from his haversack, toasted it on the end of a stick before the glowing ashes, and with the Johnnie cakes he had brought with him was soon enjoying quite a substantial repast. Hunger is a wonderful sauce—no concoction conceived and made by man is half as potent. His meal disposed of, Macnamara produced his pipe and a bag of the best Boer tobacco, and settled himself for a comfortable smoke. Before doing this, however, he had a look at the cauldron beneath the Falls. It seemed of considerable depth. It was indeed a hot day, and he thought it would ease his feet somewhat if he took his boots off. He must save his feet, as he meditated making a complete circuit of the great Rock. He sought out a soft grassy place on the edge of the sloping ledge, and placing his rifle on the ground, lay down on his back. He took care that he should be in such a position as would enable him to keep one eye on the gap, and the other on the

track where it led out of the valley again. No one was going to catch him napping.

What a pleasant day it was, and what a glorious thing to be able to stretch oneself on the soft turf, especially after having had a generous meal! That last pannikin of coffee was nectar itself, and Megaliesburg tobacco was surely a great improvement on the coarse twist he had been accustomed to elsewhere. He was at peace with all men—no, not all, there was that fellow Masepuli, not to mention Dodo, with whom he had not yet squared accounts. It was decidedly annoying, to say the least about it, to think that on the last occasion on which he had met Masepuli, Morosi's slippery son, he had been foiled in his endeavours to have it out with him—that indeed Masepuli had again contrived to turn the tables on him. Masepuli seemed to be possessed of an almost diabolical aptitude which enabled him to get the better of people just when one imagined the handle-end of the whip was secure.

Confound Masepuli! It always made him angry to think about that cunning and grinning savage, who thought himself superior to every one

else—especially a white man. Macnamara never could think of Masepuli's superior smile without the blood beginning to surge hotly through his veins. Masepuli had, of course, picked up all the bad characteristics of the whites without any of their good ones. One day, perhaps at the taking of the Rock, he would meet Masepuli face to face, and then he would have a settlement with the superior nigger, who, by some fluke, had so far averted the fate that was surely in store for him. But he would not think of Masepuli any more. It always upset him, and spoilt his digestion, to think of the wretched rebel. He shut his eyes for a moment and tried to think of something else.

His pipe was smoked out, so he laid it on one side. How delightful it all was, and how the sound of the waterfall inclined one to drowsiness! He rested his right cheek on his arm, and the world began to fade. His eyes closed for a moment or two, and the sound of the waterfall seemed a very long way off indeed. He roused himself with a start. If he did not take care he would speedily be

asleep. He must watch that gap, for if Masepuli——

A sound as of something grating on rock—a harsh laugh, a tap on the bridge of the nose administered by a playful pebble thrown at him, and he sat bolt upright in another moment.

Sitting opposite him was a black man with a wicked grin on his face, and with his—Macnamara's—rifle lying across his knees, but pointed towards his body.

The Irishman actually pinched himself to make sure he was not suffering from some peculiarly horrible form of nightmare. The black man opposite laughed again with a particularly disagreeable expression of ridicule, and Macnamara's heart sank within him as he realised that it was not the outcome of a nightmare he saw, but something very real and terrible indeed.

The sable visitor whom he beheld was no other than Masepuli himself!

CHAPTER XII

“ WHEN THE SLEEPER AWAKES ”

“ O MAN with the baboon face, why have you awakened ? ” asked Masepuli, with a grin that simulated concern admirably. “ It is a hot day for this time of the year, you have journeyed far, and the sun is yet high in the heavens ; why do you allow yourself to be disturbed ? ”

“ Why, indeed ? ” gasped Macnamara, his brain still in a whirl, and casting about for something more to the point.

“ I am glad you grasp my meaning, baboon face,” was the matter-of-fact comment. “ You see, an earthly sleep is more to be desired than that uncertain one which another world holds out. Besides, a bird in the hand—but you know the old saying.”

Masepuli had received a good education at a Mission station in his youth, and was quite

up-to-date in his speech and ideas. As a chief's son he had accompanied certain young Englishmen on hunting expeditions, and had copied their ways and even their form of speech. The result was weird, to say the least about it. But always, beneath this veneering of civilisation, there was the bloodthirsty instinct of the primitive savage.

"Ah, ye wir always a broth of a boy, Masepuli," observed Macnamara, recovering himself somewhat, and wondering how he would gain time, and eventually manage to turn the tables on his old enemy. "Why don't ye tell them on the Rock to chuck it, and give themsilves up? That ould gint Morosi, yer father, has been ill-advised, but I'm thinkin' it would be well wid you yet if ye owned up to bein' in the wrong and climbed down. And as for mesilf, it's willing I am to let bygones be bygones—in the meantime."

"Your generous impulses touch my heart, O man of the monkey face," said Masepuli, with a slight inclination of his head. "But why should we give ourselves up to you, you clever English people, seeing we are quite

comfortable on top of that Rock, and knowing as we do that you cannot take us? After a time, you soldiers will get tired of sitting before it doing nothing, and go. Your people in the country you come from across the big waters will order you home—one of your own cackling baboon countrymen has told us that—and then we shall come down from the Rock, and possess the land once more. And none of you shall be there to interfere.”

“And shure now, what about the Zulus and the Boers?”

“Lie back, and don’t imagine you’re going to make a grab at that gun!” commanded Masepuli sharply, as he detected the purpose in the Irishman’s roving eyes. “It is my turn now to talk and to dictate. If you as much as think of any treacherous design like that, I shall blow your head off your shoulders before you can wink.”

“Aw, but ye’ve a civil tongue in yer head, Masepuli, me darlint,” commented Macnamara with a troubled grin on his face, and a hint of sadness in his voice. “What was it now ye said ye’d be doin’?”

"Blow your brains out," explained the black man with unmistakable candour.

"Tut—tut now, ye're jokin'!" observed Macnamara with an amused tolerance. "That's something ye couldn't do."

"Why?" asked Masepuli curiously.

"Because, when did ye iver hear of a poor Irishman wid bhrains?"—Macnamara smiled indulgently. "Don't ye know that we're only soldiers because we're no good at all at all at anything else? If we could get a living any other way, shure and we'd be gittin' it. Ye wouldn't be hard on us surely because we've got to scrape along somehow—even at soldiering, an' bad luck to it?"

"Ah, I thought you were kin to the baboons," commented Masepuli, eyeing his victim in an interested fashion. "The missionaries at the station tell us we are all animals. I never believed them, but now I think that, with certain reservations, there may be some truth in what they say. Do you ever feel as if you wanted to climb these rocks, or to pull the tails of four-legged things that come in your way? Or would you like some pea-nuts if I found them for you now?"

“ You’re a swate crathur, Masepuli, me bhoy,” observed Macnamara, with a sadness in his voice that was ominous. “ They say you’re a little tin god on wheels amongst your own ignorant countrymen, the haythen, but ye’re not fit to stand up, as man to man, with a feller like mesilf that could knock shpots out av the likes av you as quick as winking, an’ put that in yer pipe and smoke it, ye black-avised shpalpeen ! ”

Terence Macnamara thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and glared fiercely at the enemy. If he had not disposed of his fists just then he must have made a dart at the black fiend who taunted him so. His fingers fairly itched to catch that woolly head and crack it against the stones. But Masepuli possessed his only firearm.

“ That’s right, get it off your chest, as they say in your barbarous language, baboon Irishman,” observed Masepuli, grinning wickedly. “ You see, I hold the gun, and you are at my mercy, so I can afford to laugh at your silly threats. I shall quieten you effectually when the right time comes. I hope you are prepared to die, Irishman ? But I am thirsty and would

like some coffee. Just hand over that quart pot and pannikin and the bag containing coffee. You will have the pleasure of beholding me refresh myself. But none of your monkey tricks, remember, or you die before your time."

Macnamara was so enraged at the coolness and effrontery of the superior coloured gentleman that it was as much as he could do to restrain himself. He simply ached to throw himself on the enemy. He would have a fit if the ordeal was continued much longer. The only weapon which he had at his command was his tongue, but his sarcasms were wasted on a foeman who either appeared to be amused by them or ignored them altogether. Masepuli was suavity itself, and, while he adopted an almost tolerant tone, it was easy to see he only did so so as to accentuate some fiendish revenge he was contemplating.

"Baboon face," observed Masepuli, rising to his feet and yawning, "your hands are already dirty, and I don't want to soil mine. Your fire has gone out; be good enough to make it up. There are some sticks still unused alongside. Come, come now—none of that!"

Again the gun was levelled at Macnamara's head. The Irishman's feelings had so far got the better of him that, when rising, he had tried to make a dart in upon his enemy.

Macnamara checked himself just in time. If he wanted to turn the tables on his old enemy it would not do to lose his head, and make another such foolish break. He would indeed be in danger of losing his head if he did so. His native cunning came to his aid. He kicked a stone away with his bare foot. “Them awkward shtones!” he said casually, “an’ me in me bare footsies!”

“That’s right, baboon face, think better of it,” commented Masepuli pointedly. “It would be foolish to shorten your time on earth. It’s quite absurdly insignificant as it is.”

“Aw, it’s missed yer thrade ye have,” said Macnamara, forgetting his resolve not to say anything to hurry the enemy up in the fulfilment of his threats. “It’s a parson ye should have bin. Yer langwidge is so poetical!”

“Don’t mention it, my good man,” said Masepuli with a little wave of one hand, as if in mild deprecation. “Since you mention it,

I may as well tell you that it was once suggested to me—in Durban, Natal, I think—when I went down with a despatch from my illustrious father to the Governor there—that it wouldn't be a bad idea if I became a missionary, and went back to shine as a sort of extra bright and special light amongst my own people. I did think of it, as I've said, but Durban was a gay place in those days, and things miscarried somewhat. So here I am, and build up that fire, you buttery fingers, or I'll have to put a bullet through your thick skull right away, and I don't want to be put to the trouble of making my own coffee."

Sergeant Macnamara felt as if something must snap in his head, or that he was going to have some kind of fit. To have this bumptious nigger—and Masepuli of all men—ordering him about and calling him buttery fingers and baboon face, resembled a nightmare of quite exceptional poignancy. And to think that the man who was doing it was the very one he had in his thoughts when he had entered on that expedition of possible discovery! The hunter had been hunted, and caught with a vengeance.

It seemed like some terrible Nemesis! It was surely a judgment upon him for his sins.

The Irishman moved about his enforced task as one in a dream. There did not seem to be the slightest chance of him stealing a march upon his captor. That gentleman had knocked about too much to be caught on the hop by any ordinary methods. There was no help for it.

He arose, replenished the fire, refilled the quart pot, put in some coffee, and began to prepare a meal for his black captor, who sat hard by on a rock and superintended his movements generally. He even admonished him for his slowness.

“Hurry up, baboon face!” he exclaimed. “You are slower than any Tottie—a Hottentot slave, you know—you would not even earn your salt at waiting on a gentleman. Now, can’t you see that if that stick burns through it will tip over the quart pot. Put it to rights—stupid!”

“Aw, but ye’re an exacting master!” commented Macnamara in a voice that was dull and dead. “A gentleman of colour like you

shouldn't be too hard on a poor Irish bhoy that hasn't had the same advantages ! ”

“ Well, I don't want to be too hard upon you, my man, but I really wish you'd pay a little more attention to what you are doing. I don't generally allow those who wait upon me to go without boots upon their feet, but having walked some little distance I daresay you are tired. Besides, it's hardly worth while putting on your boots again. You won't require them much longer.”

“ Thank you, sir,” said Macnamara, “ your consideration is only equalled by your good looks. Your coffee is ready, sir, and there's the grub.”

“ Thank you, Irishman, but I wish you wouldn't use that common word ‘ grub.’ You remind me of some of those common people I met down in Natal. Sit down over there while I assist myself.”

Macnamara drew himself up to his full height, touched his hat with fantastic obsequiousness, and seated himself on a stone a few paces away. It was not quite so far off as the one Masepuli had indicated, but then, as the black man said,

the Irishman never could do exactly as he was told. Macnamara's face was a study. There was a strained look about his eyes which alternately suggested tears and a suppressed rage that threatened to culminate in an outburst of frenzy. But probably the black man mistook this condition for one of fear and apathy. Masepuli went on eating and drinking.

“Masepuli,” said Macnamara after an awkward silence, “there's one thing I'd like if ye'd be tellin' me: how is Percy Scott? Ye'll be knowing the lad well. He's up on the Rock wid yer father, Morosi, isn't he?”

“What is your other name, O baboon face?” asked Masepuli abruptly.

“Macnamara, wid a Sergeant in front av it for the likes av you,” was the reply.

“Well, Mister Sergeant Macnamara, I think all the information I need give the likes of you is that it was I who caught that fellow who is of kin to the late Resident. I surprised him much as I surprised you several minutes ago. I have told you that it is hardly worth your while troubling about your boots. What do

you suppose I told him? And anyhow, is it likely I am going to condescend to answer questions put by a prisoner? If you possessed any imagination you would not require to ask such foolish questions."

"Aw, the black heart av ye! Aw, the murthering sowl av ye!" groaned Macnamara. "An' ye murthered the lad! Ye——"

"Be quiet, Sergeant Macnamara the baboon-faced, and take this quart pot and fill it again at that spring under the bank. You have forgotten yourself, as I feared you would."

"Ye haven't finished what's in the quart pot yet," observed Macnamara with a resumption of his old composure that was almost startling in its suddenness. "I'll just warm it up for you."

He placed it on the still glowing ashes without further ado. He apparently had not overheard Masepuli's expression of dissent.

"Mister Sergeant Macnamara," said Masepuli haughtily, "you must not do things without permission. If you wretched roineks partake of coffee grounds you are not to suppose the son of a chief, and one who shall one day be a

chief, is going to do so. Throw that coffee away!”

Macnamara was ominously calm now. He approached the fire, and was about to stoop to pick the quart pot up when he lifted his eyes to the gap on the hill-side, and exclaimed—

“Shure and it’s more guests ye’re going to be having, Masepuli. Just look at them coming over there!” and Macnamara regarded the opposite hill-side with a questioning stare that would have done credit to a theatrical star.

Masepuli, smart man that he was, was taken in for the moment, and looked. That moment was his undoing. When he turned towards his prisoner again—and his eyes had been hardly off him before he realised Macnamara had fooled him—he received the contents of the quart pot full in the face. Some of the scalding coffee had got into his eyes, but still Masepuli proved himself no weakling. He gasped in agony, and was about to raise his rifle, which had never been off his knees, to his shoulder, when Macnamara picked up his blanket and promptly flung it over the enemy’s head. This was a weapon of offence Masepuli had not given

a thought to when he had carelessly flung it on the ground alongside him. A South African aboriginal, be it understood, seldom goes anywhere without his blanket. It was the only feasible mode of attack that presented itself to Macnamara on the spur of the moment, and it must be admitted he turned it to good account. Masepuli, still grasping the gun, struggled furiously, but the blanket completely enveloped his head and shoulders, and Macnamara's strong arms were round his waist, keeping the blanket in place.

“Aw, the murtherin' sowl av ye!” cried the Irishman. “Ye murdered the lad and ye thought ye wir goin' to murther me too, ye did! But I'm goin' to bump the head av ye aginst that rock, I am, and——”

But there was no further breath left in Macnamara's body for speech. He required it all for the terrific struggle that was in progress. He was trying to force the black man over to the rock against which he hoped to bump his head until it cracked like an egg-shell. But Masepuli stood his ground. He realised the danger of shifting his position, and resolutely

refused to be pushed or pulled either one way or the other. Macnamara tried to trip him up, but the black man's legs were like two iron sticks and refused to budge. Doubtless, however, the Irishman's efforts were handicapped by the smooth, slippery blanket, which would not allow him to get a firm grip of his antagonist. Masepuli tried hard to get his gun free, but his arms were pinioned to his sides, so he could not manage it. Macnamara was also handicapped by the rough, gritty rock on which his bare feet had to find a footing. Certainly Masepuli's feet were innocent of boots also, but then the soles of a black man's feet are horny to a degree.

Hitherto Masepuli had acted on the defensive, but now that he had allowed his enemy to expend his strength and energy he began to act on the offensive. By sundry unexpected jerks of his body he contrived to fling his attacker first one way then another. It was as much as Macnamara could do to retain his hold upon the elusive Baphuti. The Irishman realised that every moment was reversing their positions. At any moment Masepuli might throw

him off, and then he would be at his mercy. The blanket, after all, only put him at a disadvantage. He tried to force Masepuli to the brink of the waterfall so as to push him over, and by superhuman efforts contrived to get him nearer it. The perspiration was streaming from every pore of his body. His breath came in short, laboured gasps. He felt himself weakening. He must make one last supreme effort. He threw all his weight against Masepuli who staggered back towards the edge of the waterfall. The black man's heel caught in a little cleft. They were close to the brink now. Even if Macnamara had to go over with his antagonist it would not be so very bad, for then the blanket would prevent Masepuli gripping him—provided the Irishman still maintained his hold—and the enemy would also be handicapped with the rifle. Crash on his back fell Masepuli, but the impetus with which he fell caused Macnamara to release his grip. Next moment the Irishman was shot over the head of his adversary and into the pool.

A minute later, when Masepuli recovered from the shock and gingerly raised himself, realising

that he was in a very perilous position indeed, and that a wrong movement might send him over, he disengaged himself from the blanket, and seizing his rifle, rose to his feet. For the moment the intense sunlight dazzled him, and he could not see properly. Then, rifle in hand, he gazed into the seething cauldron for some sign of his enemy. He was no longer the suave and self-possessed Masepuli, but the infuriated savage with the thirst of blood strong in him. He had made sure that in the end he would outwit and have his enemy at his mercy, and now that enemy had escaped him! Then beneath him a hat appeared on the surface. Bang! and Masepuli sent a bullet through it.

CHAPTER XIII

AN UNEXPECTED HAPPENING

SERGEANT MACNAMARA'S head was very fortunately not in his hat when the irate Masepuli sent a bullet through the latter. Still the black man not unnaturally concluded that it might have been there at the psychological moment, and for a minute or two he fully expected to see his enemy's body come to the surface. Masepuli just then must have been the very angriest man in South Africa, for had he not held that asinine British soldier in the hollow of his hand, and had he not, moreover, been playing with him as a cat might with a mouse, and yet the wretched roinek¹ had contrived to turn the tables on him after all! For a brief space certainly he had treated the bumptious Irishman like the lowest slave, and there was some satisfaction in remembering how he had ordered him about, and indulged his love of

¹ Red-coat.

irony to the fullest extent. Only he had wasted too much precious time in the doing of it. Had he only shot Macnamara without further ado, his body would by this time have borne the marks of his knife in a way that the squeamish whites once seeing would never be likely to forget. When the people at the Mission station imagined that they could change a savage black man into a civilised being all at once, they quite lost sight of the fact that human nature cannot be changed in one generation or in even half-a-dozen generations. Are there not occasions when the average Britisher feels a strange mysterious yearning within him to take a gun or a club or anything he can lay hands on and go out and kill something? Masepuli wanted to operate on Macnamara in an artistic fashion. He would have sacrificed five years of his life to have had his lost opportunity again. It made him ill to think of the folly of which he had been guilty, and now as he began to move about, he realised that his late opponent had handled him in a way that caused every bone in his body to ache.

But his enemy was still in that pool, and if

he was alive he must come to the surface. He ran round the brink of the cauldron and stationed himself on the edge of the comparatively narrow cañon—if by such name it could be dignified. If the Irishman was a good swimmer he would probably work his way down-stream. That would carry him eventually in the direction of the British camp. The enemy doubtless knew this.

Rifle in hand he followed down-stream, for it was certain that Macnamara would not remain beneath the falls. Besides, the current was so strong that it would hardly allow him to remain there. If his enemy was in the same sore and tired condition that he was, he would neither have the strength nor inclination to battle against the current. Masepuli had a shrewd guess that the roinek was pretty well exhausted. Being an astute hunter he fairly well gauged the pace at which his human quarry would descend the stream, so followed down the high banks at about the same rate. The unfortunate thing was, that he could not always travel just on the edge where he could see the water. There were places where the rock con-

siderably overhung it, and again, where there was such a confusion of loose rocks right on the edge that it was impossible to follow on the brink. Still he would follow down, and there was nothing surer than that never again would that accursed common soldier have an opportunity of fooling him. But there was some slight consolation in the thought that Macnamara, with his well-known and accustomed enterprise, had been scouting around on the look-out for blockade-runners, and that instead of catching one he had to a certain extent been caught—not altogether as he might have been, but still, disagreeably surprised, to put the mildest interpretation upon the incident.

The Irishman must have been enlightened to see him there. He would know now that his countrymen were in the habit of descending the great Rock, and holding regular communication with neighbouring tribes. How puzzled the British would be to account for the manner in which the Baphutis descended the Rock. After all, it was such a very simple way that there was every likelihood of its being overlooked. He ought to have been on the road to Pitosi's

now to see about getting up some more supplies to the fortress, and only for that wretched soldier he was following down-stream he would nearly have completed his journey. But at times he could see the hat still floating crown upwards, and he more than suspected Macnamara was not very far away from it.

He came to an immense shoulder of rock, flat and smooth, and through which somehow the stream had managed to cut. In places it was at least fifty feet above the water. He would run on and take up a position at a spot which would command the stream, and surely he would be able to spot the fugitive as he came to the surface to breathe. Of course he could not be always swimming under water. His spirits rose, and he ran on ahead of the hat. No garrulous white man was going to trick him this time.

He reached a place where a point of rock overhung the river. It was at least fifty feet above the surface of the water. This point of vantage commanded a splendid view of the course both up and down. He could not have chosen a better spot to reconnoitre. But no particular

skill was required to spot an enemy there—the position seemed designed for the purpose. Keenly he scanned the troubled surface of the stream, but there was no sign of the enemy as yet. The water should not have been broken just there, for in all truth it was deep enough, but the walls of the cañon having contracted, the pent-up waters rushed past at the speed of a mill-race. It would not be so very easy for Macnamara to get out of it if he once passed that spot, and Masepuli had rather a shrewd suspicion that the Irishman knowing that he, Masepuli, would be following him up, was not at all likely to risk leaving the water too soon. Yes, the fool of an Irishman would yet learn that he was anything but a simpleton. He would certainly find that out.

How that boiling coffee had scalded his face! Why had he been such a fool as to allow the Irishman to come so close to him? True, he had Macnamara covered with his rifle, but Irishmen were proverbially tricky. An Englishman would hardly have thought of such a dodge. There were large blisters forming on his face, and his eyes were feeling very queer. But he

would have revenge—yes, terrible revenge. Was Macnamara never going to show up? The hat was now almost abreast of him. He lay flat on his stomach and leant over the ledge so as to get a better view of the gorge. Oh, where was that wretched soldier?

There was a hardly audible patter of naked feet behind him. He turned sharply to see who it was. At the same moment both of his ankles were encircled by rough hands that gripped like bands of steel. The owner of these hands was so unexpectedly close to him that Masepuli actually gasped in affright. But it was the identity of the newcomer that startled the black man, and sent a thrill of superstitious dread through him. His attacker was no other than Macnamara—the victim whom he had been looking for in the stream!

“My turn this time!” exclaimed the Irishman as he raised the ankles that wriggled in vain, and tilted Masepuli headlong into the depths below.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW IT CAME ABOUT

AT this point it is necessary to explain how it was Macnamara came to surprise Masepuli instead of the latter surprising him. After all, there was nothing at all wonderful in the turning of the tables. When the Irishman, to save himself, had to unlock his hands from the back of the blanketed Masepuli, and so was shot headlong over the waterfall, it was perhaps the most opportune thing that could have happened to him. It was no particular distance to the water beneath, and as the Irishman took the water head first, and had time to place his hands in position over his head, he plunged into the stream in quite an orthodox fashion.

Fortunately Macnamara had all his faculties about him, and was a good diver and swimmer. He headed down stream, and the current carried him on quickly. Fortunately his hat had come off, and it was a good thing for him his head

had not been in it when Masepuli fired. Short of breath as he was, Macnamara managed to stay below water for a minute or so. Then turning on his side he looked upwards and came to the surface where a wreath of foam floated in an eddy. A couple of long breaths and he was down again, swimming for all he was worth. The water was not so particularly cold as he had imagined it would be, but perhaps in his excited condition he was not exactly a true judge. He knew that he had entered a species of gorge, but where it led to exactly he could only surmise. He knew the stream eventually turned round towards the Orange River again. It might be that he was entering a cañon where it would be impossible to land when he wanted to, or it might be that he would find himself being shot over falls, compared to which the ones which he had so lately unwillingly negotiated were mere child's-play, but, in any case, he realised that Masepuli would most assuredly have succeeded in shooting him had he not taken to the water. There was nothing for it but to keep on.

He did not know how far he had swam down

stream, but he had a fairly shrewd guess that Masepuli would divine his intentions and follow him up on the bank. At frequent intervals he continued to rise to the surface and fill his lungs with air. He had the presence of mind always to do so under the cliff on which he knew his enemy was. The thought of how he had managed to elude Masepuli heartened him. He almost lost sight of his culpable carelessness in allowing that rascal to surprise him. Still he would not forget in a hurry what a harrowing nightmareish time Masepuli had given him. And to think the black man had actually ordered him about like a Hottentot boy, and sworn at him under the pretext that he was clumsy! Well, that was something further on the slate against Masepuli. He wondered when he would again get a chance of wiping that something off his slate. At present there did not seem much chance. Masepuli held the handle-end of the whip.

But he was becoming chilled, and if he did not leave the water soon he would be getting cramp. He had come to a place where the bank seemed broken, and the cliff overhung.

He swam in to the side, and next moment was out of the water, cowering behind a rock.

A moment or two of inaction, and he realised it would be safer if he could ascend the steep but somewhat broken cliff and lie there. Masepuli would hardly be looking for him in such a place. He felt somewhat stiff and sore, but he could climb like a cat, and quickly gained a point just under the edge of the cliff. Carefully he raised his head and peered over. He ducked in another instant and his breath came quickly. His heart fluttered painfully. He had seen Masepuli coming directly towards him, but the black man had not seen him. To flatten himself against the rocks was the work of a moment. If Masepuli chanced to look over the cliff just there he would assuredly detect his presence. He might even notice the water that had dripped from his clothes on to the stones. The pit-pat of the enemy's feet came nearer. They stopped just opposite him. Masepuli could not have been more than a couple of yards, if that, away from him. He was doubtless scanning the stream at this point. It was touch-and-go with him now. If the keen eyes



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HE WATCHED HIS ENEMY KEENLY

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of the black man detected as much as a drop of water on the rocks a few feet below him, he was as good as dead. Macnamara breathed a little prayer.

Then to his intense relief he heard the pit-pat of the bare feet on the rocks recede. Oh joy! He ventured to look up, and there was that fool Masepuli hurrying on again, every minute or two craning his neck to survey the current below. What an unspeakable idiot Masepuli was, after all! The black man never once seemed to imagine that his hated enemy might have got out of the stream and contrived to secrete himself somewhere. He certainly did not think he had somehow managed to climb the ravine and get behind him.

A bold scheme suggested itself to the Irishman. He would hunt the hunter. At the imminent risk of being seen and shot, he stepped on to the level ground and ran back from the brink some little distance to where there was a little cover. Then like a bloodhound he trotted forward, in a stooping fashion, watching his enemy keenly the while. He was ready to drop and lie flat on the ground at the slightest sign

of Masepuli looking round. But the smart Baphuti was too unsuspicious to do that. Then there came the stretch of flat rock with the projecting point. To his intense satisfaction he saw his enemy throw himself flat on it, crawl forward, and peer over. Now was his time !

It was an extremely risky thing to do indeed, but it was Macnamara's only chance of getting back at the man who had openly admitted that he had killed his young friend Percy Scott. That fact alone was more than sufficient to determine Macnamara. He would steal behind the murderer and tip him bodily over the cliff. It would be an extremely risky business to attempt to take him prisoner in such a dangerous spot, for the black man, with all the well-known fatalism of the black races, would, if he saw he was going to be worsted, certainly take his opponent over the cliff with him. It was not good enough to lose one's life for the sake of a bad black. Still, if he saw he could secure Masepuli and the rifle at the same time without undue risk, he would do so.

Like a wild-cat stalking its quarry the Irish-

man pressed on until he was directly in a line with the prostrate black man. There was some sixty yards of smooth black rock to be negotiated before he could reach him. If Masepuli happened to turn his head he was as good as dead. What a lucky thing after all he was without his boots! It had saved him taking them off.

Then Masepuli moved uneasily and raised himself on his hands. Macnamara was down in an instant. Whether Masepuli looked behind him or not Macnamara could never tell, because he was afraid to look at that moment lest he should himself be seen. But it would not do to remain prostrate too long in case Masepuli should rise from his rock. He might in that case not get another chance of surprising him.

Macnamara looked again. Joy! Masepuli was down on his face scanning the stream. He actually held his rifle in his two hands over the brink as if the chance of getting a shot at the supposed victim below might present itself. O long-eared Masepuli!

Holding his breath, Macnamara covered the

sixty yards or so of flat sloping rock between him and his foeman. The brief time in which he did it seemed to occupy a week of normal time. Then it seemed as if Masepuli must have somehow detected his presence, for almost before his hands closed on the ankles of the enemy, the black man turned, and saw.

For a heart's-beat there was a pause of recognition and realisation of the situation. The two foemen gazed as if fascinated into each other's eyes. In that brief moment Masepuli realised that his late despised enemy had changed places with him, and that now the wretched roinek held the handle-end of the whip. The poignancy and bitterness of that brief unit of time must have been something almost passing comprehension. An eternity of surprise, hate, and self-reproach was crowded into it. For the moment it actually deprived him of the power to act. When he did so it was too late. His legs shot out in vain ; those vice-like hands held him tight, and, horror of horrors—he felt himself being bundled heels over head over the brink. And what a world of malign triumph on the victor's face !

But what happened has already been told.

Macnamara did not look over the brink to see what happened to Masepuli. He was a civilised man and not a savage. If the black man did not strike the water so as to break his neck, he would at least be stunned, and the consequence would be that drowning would finish him. The sides of the cañon now seemed unbroken and precipitous. Masepuli's body would have to drift a long way down stream before being stranded. "Aw," exclaimed Macnamara, "and ye said ye killed the lad, ye did! And ye called me 'my man' and 'baboon face'!"

The Irishman now noted that it was getting well on in the afternoon, and that if he did not hurry up he might not be able to reach and re-cross the Orange River that day. He had thought of making back to the place where he had camped for his midday meal, but he realised the danger of being seen in that neighbourhood, more particularly as he was now without fire-arms. His rifle and boots would have to remain there till a more convenient season.

He possessed a good head for locality, so

he had a look around, and noted the position of the run. He then struck across country. At first he did not particularly miss his boots, but when he came to a stony ridge his troubles began. Until he met with the Orange River again his march was one long penance. Masepuli had been the cause of him leaving his boots behind, and even although he had, as he hoped, put an end to that worthy's monkey tricks for ever, he had good reason to anathematise the tricky son of Morosi the chief in a very comprehensive and conclusive fashion indeed. Moreover, so sore did his feet become that he actually felt sorry Masepuli was now in all probability dead, because he would not have an opportunity of meting out to him the condign punishment which such a painful condition of affairs merited. Hatless, wet, and feeling as if he had been put through a quartz-crushing machine, the C.M.R. wended his weary way towards camp. He found the raft as he had left it, and was soon across the Orange River. It would have been too dark to have negotiated the passage in safety in another ten minutes. He avoided the sentries and approached the

lines of his own regiment. But the worst of his troubles was yet to come. How was he going to tell Mr. Austin and Jack about the murderous admission Masepuli had made to him ?

CHAPTER XV

NEWS FROM MOROSI'S ROCK

HE or she had some considerable knowledge of men and things who first said it was the unexpected that always happened. When Macnamara had gone to the guard-tent, and reported his arrival, it was with a sinking heart that he then proceeded to find Jack Scott. How was he to tell his young friend what Masepuli had told him—and he had no reason to doubt the truth of the statement—that his cousin had met his death at the hands of Morosi's evil son Masepuli?

Somewhat to his relief he heard that Mr. Austin had returned, and was now with his nephew in a large tent which was pitched in the immediate neighbourhood of that occupied by the O.C. It would be better that he should first relate his late experiences to the Resident. He could then write out a report for the official use of the O.C.

When the Irishman, who had first gone to his own quarters and put on a pair of dry stockings and boots, attracted the attention of those inside the marquee tent, he was almost surprised to meet with such a pleased reception. He saluted the Resident.

"Come in, Sergeant Macnamara, come in," cried Jack. "We've wonderful news to tell you if you haven't heard it already. It's almost too good to be true."

But Macnamara's face did not seem to respond to the cheerful greeting. The news he was in possession of surely more than outweighed anything Jack could have to tell. The latter seemed to have forgotten that member of his family who had been missing for so many months. Of course the fate of Percy Scott had never been definitely cleared up, but that he was dead was surely beyond doubt. Had not those unlucky ones who had fallen into Morosi's clutches suffered terrible deaths, and had their heads not been stuck up on poles upon the great Rock in full view of the enemy?

Macnamara, brave man that he was, could not summon up courage at the moment to ask

Jack regarding the nature of the good news. He greeted Mr. Austin instead, then became awkward and strangely ill at ease.

“I believe, Sergeant Macnamara, that you have some news too, but it doesn't seem quite of the same nature as ours,” observed Mr. Austin. “Perhaps it would be as well if you told us yours first.”

It was a sad and delicate task, but Macnamara told something of what had happened, and what Masepuli had said concerning the fate of Percy. He, however, took care to say that, of course, it was only Masepuli who had told him, and that gentleman's information was certainly not above suspicion. He was heard patiently to the end, then Mr. Austin spoke.

“From what I know of Masepuli, and from what has transpired since I came back to camp this morning,” said the Resident, “I am inclined to think that Masepuli lied. If several men are not mistaken, and amongst them is Jack, Percy has been heard from and seen.”

“When?” asked the Irishman. There was something about the news that he could not reconcile with what he knew.

“Jack here can tell what he saw himself,” replied the magistrate. “It happened this forenoon. Tell the sergeant what you saw, Jack.”

“It was about eleven o’clock in the forenoon,” said Jack, “and the guard was being changed on Saddle Rock. You know how that is done, the men have got to go up singly—run the blockade as it were, and risk a pot shot from the enemy. Well, I had to go to the round-house, too, to see some one, and I ran up with the first sentry. As soon as I got there I took the telescope to see if I could make out where the snipers were stationed, when I saw some one running on the level on top—just on the edge of the plane and above the highest schanze. Two or three men were making after him. I had them focussed instantly, and saw whom I am certain was Percy struggling in the hands of two or three Baphutis. He was right on the edge of the cliff at the time, and as the niggers caught him he flung over something he had carried in his hand. I immediately turned the telescope over to Sergeant Bryce without saying what I had seen, so as

to ascertain what he had to say. Next moment he cried out that he saw Percy bareheaded and struggling with the Baphutis. Most of the others saw the struggle with the naked eye, and it was obvious that the person whom the Baphutis were tackling was Percy. Then we saw him overpowered, and led away."

"And I hope it's right you are when you say you're sure it was the lad," broke in Macnamara. "But there's not a move on the boards them dhivils aren't up to." He did not care to express in exact words what he thought about the incident.

"You mean, you think it might have been a stage-managed business got up for some reason or other to lead us to believe that Percy was still alive and on the Rock?" asked Mr. Austin, noticing the reticence of the Irishman.

"Shure, an' that's what I'm thinkin' it might have been, although why they should want to do it, bates me!" replied Macnamara. "But then, what was it he threw over? Have ye managed to git that?"

"We have," replied Mr. Austin, "and that is what enables us to say with a certainty that



JACK FINDING PERCY'S MESSAGE

it was Percy we saw. Jack here actually managed to sneak to the spot where the message fell. It was in a little dry ravine at the foot of the Rock, and if I had known he was going to attempt to get that message by daylight, I certainly would have put him for safety into the guard-room to make sure he didn't embark on any such foolhardy and risky enterprise. But I suppose he was so keen on finding out what Percy had flung over that he couldn't wait. No one saw him set out or he wouldn't have got the chance. Had the Baphutis thought that any one would be mad enough to come for that packet by daylight, Jack would never have returned alive. It was, therefore, the very madness of his action that ensured his safety. And here is the message."

The message, which had been done up like a parcel in part of an old kaross, was simply a square piece of tin, probably cut from an old biscuit or ammunition box, and on it was scratched, probably by some sharp pointed instrument, or even a piece of sharp quartz, the words—

“TO MR. AUSTIN.—I am a prisoner here and closely watched. Other attempts to communicate frustrated. Baphutis getting supplies from outside. Will likely be found in stone hut or caves west end of same. PERCY.”

“That’s Percy’s work!” cried Jack excitedly. “As I’ve said already, that’s the way he prints his capital I’s and his W’s. I’d swear to it anywhere!”

“Glory to goodness!” exclaimed Macnamara with a sense of relief almost beyond words. “That shpalpeen Masepuli lied when he said he had killed him, and unless it’s mistaken I am, it’s very dead Masepuli is his own blessed self at the prisint moment. But why don’t ye ask the ould bhoy Morosi himself to give him up? He must know that it will go better with him if he does.”

“That’s what we told him as soon as we got Percy’s message,” said Mr. Austin. “I took a white flag up to the first schanze myself, and asked for a parley. They sent some one out to meet me. I can guess now why they have all along refused a parley—they were

afraid of us seeing and demanding Percy. Besides, as of course we all know now Morosi's people are getting supplies from outside, they can hold out indefinitely at that rate. But we'll have men enough to stop that game at any moment now. I told Morosi's messenger that it was no use denying that Percy was on the Rock, for several of us had seen him. I said, as I had a right to, that if they gave up Percy it would be ever so much better for them. If they did not give him up within the next few days, absolutely unhurt and none the worse for his enforced stay amongst them, it would be a very black look-out for them indeed.

“The messenger went back to communicate with Morosi, and in a very short time returned to say that his chief had instructed him to tell the white people that he and his subjects were getting on very well on the Rock, and he did not see that there was any necessity to accept dictation from them. What had they, the British, already done?—nothing. What were they doing?—nothing. In fact, Morosi and his Baphutis were getting tired of watching the English loafing about at the gateway of

his fortress, and unless they very soon cleared out—well, they would see what would happen ! As to the captive lad they spoke about, let the English first leave the neighbourhood and Morosi would then see what he could do in the matter. He was not going to discuss the subject of the prisoner with the English at all. There was no necessity for him to do so. He had spoken.

“ And that,” concluded Mr. Austin, “ is how the matter stands at present. It may not be a very satisfactory state of affairs, but at least we know that Percy is alive, if kept a rather close prisoner, and that is a very great load off our minds. The trouble is, Morosi won't budge. You see, the policy of the British has been so vacillating, if not actually savouring of timidity at times, that those black people have very naturally come to hold us very cheap. They imagine that we are a people who have an inordinate opinion of our own importance, and who undertake things that we find ourselves unable to perform and so back out of at the eleventh hour. They also seem to know that we are under the sway of two

parties, and that the one at home is pretty sure to pull us back by the coat tails whenever it thinks we are going too far. That, in fact, we allow party politics to ruin what ought to be sound national policy. But the troops may be back any day now with Colonel Bayley in command, and I hope that when Morosi sees that we mean business he will think better of it, and give Percy up. Of course, it isn't only Percy he'll have to answer for."

"But don't you think there's a chance of Morosi doing Percy some harm if he thinks things are going against him?" asked Jack.

"Of course, I can't answer that with any certainty," replied the Resident, "but I shouldn't think, from what I know of Percy's relations with them, that they would do him any serious injury. As you know, he always seemed to understand them, and was a great favourite. That's to say, with the people generally. I wouldn't like, however, to answer for Dodo or Letuka—Masepuli, I hope, won't give us any more trouble—or one or two others if they got a chance of spiting us by doing him harm. I only hope they won't get it. I'm afraid the time

is past for treating with them for the exchange of prisoners and that sort of thing. Morosi won't give us the slightest satisfaction in the meantime."

"When is it you will be expecting Colonel Bayley and the others back, sir?" asked Macnamara.

"They may come any day now, Sergeant, and I hope they've brought proper shells for that old mortar of 1802. It's really the most serviceable weapon we have. If there is any of their cattle left alive up there, it will finish them off. Of course there have been too few of us up till now to prevent their blockade running. I expect the troops will completely surround the mountain when they come. There will be no such thing as the enemy getting further supplies then. I only hope Percy will be in a sufficiently safe place when the old mortar begins to shower down shrapnel. I should think it would pretty well put the nerves of a Baphut on edge, though people say the nervous organisation of a savage is not so fully developed as that of civilised man."

"I suppose, sir," said Jack, "that is why

they say a black man or a Red Indian can stand torture or pain so much better than a white man—with stoicism, as writers put it ? ”

“ I believe that is so,” replied Mr. Austin. “ You see, a savage generally lives a much more natural life than a civilised man. He drinks water principally, and doesn’t live at such a pressure. He lives in the open air—a most important point—and doesn’t poison his lungs and system generally by breathing vitiated air as we supposedly enlightened people do. You never find a savage who is a ‘ mere bundle of nerves.’ In some respects certainly, the so-called savage has the best of it.”

“ Well, sir, with your permission I’ll be going,” said Macnamara, rising. “ It’s feeling I am as if I’d been put through a mangle, and thanks to that Masepuli—but I’ll say no more about him seeing as how he’s likely to be where it’ll be too sultry to talk much. I’m not quite sartin whether my footsies are my own or somebody else’s, so I’ll be wishing you good-night, sir.”

“ Good-night, Macnamara,” said Mr. Austin, “ and I hope that before we are a fortnight

older you'll be able to help us give Percy a welcome back, and that the British flag will be flying over Morosi's Rock. I hope you'll be none the worse for the rough time you've had."

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT HAPPENED TO PERCY

AND now since it has transpired that Percy Scott was not killed, as was generally supposed, it may be as well to relate something of what really happened to him.

It will be remembered that with Cullum the scout—who was surprised by the Baphutis and killed—Percy went to reconnoitre the Rock on which the rebels had taken up their position. They had on reaching it separated so as to complete the circuit by riding round it, and again meeting. Percy had heard voices, and was lying in the undergrowth, when, to his surprise and consternation, he was seized from behind. He was pressed to earth and his fire-arms taken from him. He was held in such a position that his struggles were futile.

“Lie still, Baas,” cried a voice which he thought he recognised. “We do not wish particularly to hurt you, but we must make

you prisoner. Were it your cousin Jack, or any one else we were handling, you would be a dead man, for we are now on the war-path, and you know what that means."

Percy shuddered, although he was upon the whole a decidedly plucky fellow. He knew very well how those black men always mutilated those whom they killed in war time.

"Ah, Babawane," said Percy, "I didn't think you would treat me like this—you whom I always looked upon as a friend!"

Percy realised now that there were three or four natives standing over him. One of them spoke.

"It was not Babawane who seized you first, and it is not Babawane who holds you now, Baas," he said, "but if Babawane were told to kill, and to give you the cut that ye may know of, and faltered in doing so, he would have to answer to us for showing such white-livered ways while on the war-path. Yea, he should surely die as Tshaka killed those of his men who would not face an enemy."

"Well, let me up," said Percy. "You are squeezing the breath out of my body sitting

on my back like that. And why are you tying me up so ? ”

“ Baas, I believe you would prefer to be killed,” said a third native, whose voice Percy also recognised.

“ Ah, it is you, ‘Mlimi,’ ” said Percy. “ Do you remember the last time we spoke together ? ”

“ Yes, Baas, and it is unlikely I shall forget it. You and I went hunting together, and you would insist on carrying the greater part of the load, because I had got a thorn in my foot, and you thought I was tired. But we are on the war-path now. As Babawane says, we are doing something we never did before in taking you prisoner.”

“ Is there any necessity to take me prisoner at all ? ” asked Percy. “ Of course I don’t want to ask any favours of you, but why not let me go ? ”

“ Because you will be safer with us now, young Baas. War has been declared between your people and ours, and you know very well what that means—death to you and death to us. Warriors are not out on the war-path to play like children at war. It seems to me

we are like piccaninnies now in not killing you. But because you were always like a white brother to us, we will risk the wrath of some of the others, and take you along with us. Arise ! ”

Without any unnecessary rudeness the black men assisted Percy to his feet. They had secured his hands to his sides by means of thongs of greenhide without unduly hurting him, but still in a way that would prevent him raising his hands so as to be of use to him. Percy now saw that there were four natives. He would have shouted to warn Cullum, but he knew that the scout would be well on his way. As for struggling to free himself, he realised the folly of any such proceeding. He knew he was very fortunate in having been surprised by warriors whom he had known, and who had undoubtedly liked him, otherwise he would have been brutally murdered. It was a very rare thing indeed for an impi to spare an enemy.

“ Where are you going to take me to ? ” asked Percy. “ Hello ! there are a lot of you about ! You are breaking up camp. Where are you going to ? ”

“ Come along with us and see, Baas,” said

'Mlimi, in a not unkindly fashion. "Do you think it is likely we should remain in such a place with more English troops on the way up to fight us when we have a fortress like Morosi's within a day's march? Where would we be going to but to Morosi's Mountain, where we can sit at our ease and laugh at all the British soldiers in the country, ay, and in Natal, too? But you have never seen Morosi's Mountain, have you, Baas?"

They had ranged themselves around Percy and urged him to walk along with them. The boy knew it would serve no good purpose to resist. They struck a native path and headed north.

"And what are you going to do at Morosi's Mountain, Babawane?" asked Percy. "When the troops come they will surround it, and Morosi will have to give in at last. And what will you do for food? You cannot have enough there to last you for ever?"

"You will see what we have when you get there," was the reply. "It will surprise you to see how much we have got. I think you English must have been asleep or you would have seen how for years we have been preparing

for such an event as this. Many a time when we have seen you English singing yourselves blue in the face with your war-songs—songs of what you were going to do—while we went on quietly getting ready for war, yea, under your very noses, we have marvelled at your extraordinary complacency, and have even laughed openly at you without your seeming to see the joke. And I do not believe you did see it, because you were all the time looking upon and admiring the coloured flags you evidently regarded as a fetish. But your songs and your waving flags will not help you when it comes to being ready for war, O Baas ! ”

“ Well, we shall see, Babawane, when the time comes,” said Percy. “ Anyhow, I do not think you Baphutis have behaved in a proper fashion to us who have always treated you well. We have trusted you, and kept Tshaka away from your doors when otherwise that chief would have utterly destroyed you. But for us he would have killed your women and children, and your warriors would have had to serve under him or die. No, you forget all that. I do not think you have showed up at all well

in this matter. I am sorry, because I thought better of you."

"Well, Baas, it was the hut-tax, you know," said 'Mlimi. "You ought not to have enforced that. It was a small matter, perhaps, to you English, but the paying of it seemed to us like a token of bondage."

"It was not a token of bondage, 'Mlimi, and whoever told you that—and I think I know who those discontented and plotting spirits are—did so for their own evil ends. You must have known that the money received from the hut-tax was only used for the purpose of regulating your affairs, and safeguarding you against outside attacks. But you have been told that before, and turned a deaf ear. You will yet be sorry for having done so."

"Ah well, Baas, Morosi is chief, and not any of us. We are simply his warriors, and if you had been born one you would know that, despite what your missionaries call the blessings of peace, there would come a time when the war spirit would stir within you, and you would be compelled to go upon the war-path and blood yourself. And, if I mistake not, there are times

when you whites feel impelled to do much the same thing, though you call it by another name."

Percy was silent, for strangely enough just then the scriptural saying recurred to his memory, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? No more can ye—" After all, their attitude was not to be wondered at. Still, they knew what the consequences of that attitude must be, and they wilfully kept on in the teeth of trouble.

And now they came to a great open flat, and in the moonlight Percy could see a seemingly interminable procession of black people. All the women and boys carried their belongings on their heads. In front and on either side were the Baphuti warriors decked out in all the fearsome panoply of war gear. All carried shields and assegais. Doubtless there were scouts out in all directions to guard against surprise. It was some of those scouts who had surprised Percy, and who about the same time murdered Cullum. It was, of course, evident that the Baphutis knew of the British reinforcements, and they were losing no time in

moving into that new position where they knew they would be secure. Very likely their remaining so long in their late position was only a cunning ruse, and, as afterwards transpired, the greater part of their men folk had been at Morosi's Mountain all the time, building up and strengthening the strong and well-planned schanzes and fortifications, unsuspected and unmolested. Their work was now practically completed, and ready for occupation. Their cattle and stock, even to abundance of forage, had been there for some time.

The great caravan kept steadily on. In the daytime they could not have made such good time, as then the heat of the sun would have interfered with their exertions. They stopped when they reached the mountains, and Percy, somewhat to his surprise, and certainly to his great satisfaction, was given some hot coffee, a coarse species of mealie bread, and some jerked venison, which was practically the Boer biltong. It was quite evident that the Basutos appreciated some of the white man's luxuries, the possession of coffee proved that. As Percy took the opportunity of pointing out to 'Mlimi, if it had

not been for their association with the British it was fairly certain that they would not have been in a position to get and enjoy such things. Their neighbours, the Boers, would have laughed at the idea of a black man using coffee. "Ah, Baas," said 'Mlimi, "the coffee is a good thing certainly, but we could just as easily go without it if we had to. As I have said, it is not a question of such things as coffee when the old war spirit stirs within us."

They rested there some time for the sake of the women and children, and as Percy was feeling somewhat tired after the trying and exciting time he had experienced, he lay down on the grass, and Babawane giving him a kaross—a native rug made from the skin of some wild animal—he speedily went to sleep. Somehow he had no particular fear of those black men so fearsomely decked out in their war gear, and sometimes chanting their war songs as they walked quickly along. There were times when he had been on quite friendly terms with these same men, for on two or three occasions he had accompanied them on their hunting trips, and learned much concerning their modes of life

and folk-lore. They in turn never seemed to tire of hearing of the wonders of civilisation, although occasionally it was obvious they took some of the things he told them with a considerable grain of salt. They were, however, always much too polite to openly express any doubt.

It was indeed a strange experience for a British lad to be walking in file with those African warriors on the war-path. Sometimes as they passed through some little wooded valley where the trail was smooth and gave out a hollow sound, they would chant their awe-inspiring war choruses, and beat time with their feet, while they shook their assegais in air until Percy could hardly believe that these wild and fearsome warriors were the same men with whom he had at one time laughed and chatted.

They started again at dawn, and now the track they used led through some very wild country indeed. At times they would be skirting the brink of a precipice, and again they would be descending a mountain side that appeared altogether too steep for human beings to negotiate. It was slow travelling now. It

became evident that the British had discovered their retreat, and were following them up at all possible speed. Still they knew they were practically safe now, and did not particularly worry.

When the British surprised part of their rear-guard things looked serious, but Morosi's generalship had simply delayed that rear-guard on purpose to check the pursuit, and so the main body knew it could make the great fortress unchecked. This it did early in the afternoon.

When Percy saw the great natural stronghold with its three precipitous sides, and the now imposing stone schanzes thrown across the face of the inclined plane, his heart sank. It seemed an impossible position to take. It was a veritable Gibraltar, only with vastly more room on the top for people to live and move about on.

The caravan entered by breaks in the schanzes which had been left open on purpose, and the moment they had passed through, the Baphutis started to build up the openings again. Down the middle of the plane, and intersecting these schanzes, ran a double wall or schanze. This was commanded by loopholes on either side,

so that, if necessary, an enfilading movement could be made. No European engineers could have planned a defence more skilfully. There were even cunningly concealed pits, and stakes to hamper an advancing enemy.

The inclined plane which led to the spacious plateau on top was nearly a mile in length. Here a great surprise awaited Percy. For the time being he could hardly believe that the fortifications he saw were the work of black men. He thought he must have been somehow transplanted to Europe. Zigzag schanzes or breastworks commanded this great grassy citadel. In a sheltered spot behind two low parallel ridges in the centre were a number of substantially built stone buildings. Two of them were powder magazines, the others were dwelling and store houses. There were large stacks of hay for the numerous cattle that occupied the far end of the plateau, and there were a couple of most excellent springs, testifying to a never-failing supply of water. There were preparations of a nature that plainly showed planning of quite an exceptionally high order, and months if not years of strenuous

labour. In point of fact, as has already been said, Morosi's tastes were of a decidedly military turn. From any part of the great plateau a magnificent view could be had of the surrounding country. This black man's castle stood in an elbow of the Orange River, and deep water in places bathed its base. To the north and east were the great peaks of the South African Switzerland—the Drakensberg Mountains of Basutoland.

Percy was taken to a stone house which also seemed to do duty as a species of guard-room, and told that he could consider it his lodging-house until such time as Morosi could see fit to dispose of him.

“In the meantime, you will be a sort of prisoner at large,” explained Babawane. “If there is anything you would like, ask 'Mlimi or myself, and if possible we shall oblige you. You need not for a moment think there is any chance of escaping. Unless, like the aasvogels, you can fly, you cannot possibly descend the great cliff. It is twenty times deeper than the steeple of the big church at Wepener. We advise you, for your own sake, not to try it.

As for trying to escape by way of the entrance, it is manned day and night by warriors who sleep in the schanzes, so you can save yourself the trouble of thinking about that. And remember, that wherever you go, and whatever you do, shall be noted. Take the advice of those who have been friendly with you, and make not trouble."

CHAPTER XVII

THE ATTACK

To relate all the extraordinary things that happened to Percy on Morosi's Rock during the siege which lasted all through the South African winter would make a book itself, and a very interesting one at that. He got to know Morosi himself fairly well, and actually taught that black potentate the game of draughts. Needless to say, Percy saw many strange sights during his imprisonment. The old potentate ruled his black army with a rod of iron. More than once the lad was obliged to witness the execution of some black warrior who had been guilty of a breach of discipline. He had tried to get out of the way when the terrible penalty was being exacted, but Morosi had commanded that every man, woman, and child who was on the Rock, save those, of course, in the schanzes, and on the look-out, should be present on pain of death. Morosi believed in the value of example.

Once, as has been said, Percy contrived to write a message upon a piece of tin, and wrap it in part of an old kaross which he threw over the Rock. He was seen doing it, and after that his liberty was somewhat restricted. Still, that did not prevent him trying to descend the Rock at a certain broken part one moonlight night. The attempt was, of course, unsuccessful, and nearly cost him his life. He only managed, by almost superhuman efforts, to climb back to safety before dawn.

Babawane and 'Mlimi found out all about the attempt, and, to their credit be it said, they did not give him away, although they rated him in no measured terms.

Percy, of course, knew that the besieged ones kept up regular communication with the outside world by means of a long rope and a ladder which they let down at a certain place, which, perhaps, may be dealt with later on. Naturally, Morosi's troops did not apprehend any attack from the cliff sides of the fortress. The British were mad enough in some things, but hardly mad enough for that.

The winter wore on comparatively unevent-

fully, but when the old mortar of 1802 began to drop shells on to the top of the Rock, things began, literally, to hum with a vengeance. It would have rejoiced the heart of the besiegers could they have only witnessed the consternation and havoc their shells created. They never dropped twice in the same place. If one burst over the flat a great shower of death-dealing jagged iron shot out in all directions, and no one was safe from it anywhere, unless one took refuge in the little caves in the sides of the ridge. If a shell fell between the schanzes on the sides of the hill, it would roll down against those who manned them, and bursting exact a holocaust before they could get out of the way.

Perhaps one of the worst features of those iron showers was the havoc they created with the live stock. The poor animals were struck down and killed in every direction, and as, of course, they could not be all used for food, some of them would be left for the great aasvogels, the huge scavenger birds of South Africa. It was an extraordinary sight to see those giants of the air so gorged with food that they

could not fly away. They would sit unrecking through a shower of deadly shrapnel. If any one came near they confronted the intruder angrily, and would not budge.

The last drop of bitterness in the cup of the besieged ones, who always thought the British would at last become tired of the proceedings and go, was the star-shells which the enemy fired at night over their position. This enabled the besiegers to train their guns and drop shells upon them, so that at no hour of the day or night were the Baphutis left at rest. This constant shelling got upon their nerves. The women and children were distracted, and had hardly a moment's peace, and even the warriors were becoming demoralised. Moreover, large numbers of them were killed. The British had more than once sent word to the Baphutis to surrender, but their messages were invariably treated with contempt. No blame could be attached to the British for the slaughter that took place. But the country was insisting that the prolonged siege should be brought to a close one way or another, and so in order to tell how it was brought about, it is necessary

at this point to leave Percy on the Rock wondering what was going to happen, and return to the British camp and to Jack.

Reinforcements for the British had now arrived, Allan Maclean with two hundred Fingoes being amongst them. There was Lieutenant Mullenbeck with about the same number of men, many of them, however, being Tambookies. There was the Wodehouse Border Guard, and about three hundred men all told of the C.M.R. The Colonial Secretary himself had come out to the Mountain to give Morosi a last chance, and had actually met that stubborn and self-satisfied potentate in the open, and for three hours had talked over matters with him. As many valuable lives had been lost, and immense expense caused, the Queen's representative very properly insisted on an unconditional surrender. But Morosi would not have it, so negotiations were abruptly cut short. It was decided to bring matters to a head at once.

It was resolved to attack the Mountain on a certain date at the dip of the moon. The time was kept a close secret. Then for three

days shrapnel was showered on the Mountain, and the schanzes bombarded. The enemy was harassed day and night. "The time has passed for leniency. They must be brought to their senses," said Colonel Bayley. "They will neither deliver up nor exchange prisoners with us. Neither will they allow their women and children to leave the Rock. We must do our best to safeguard them if they will not do it themselves."

It was on Wednesday night the 19th of November that the great attack was destined to take place. Colonel Bayley had been very busy all day with his officers rehearsing the plan of attack. One, Captain Bourne, with a hundred and seventy of the C.M.R., led by that officer and Lieutenant Springer, was to carry the scaling ladders to the fissure in the side of the cliff already mentioned, and to begin the assault. As soon as it was thought the ladders were in position and some of the men had reached the top, Captain Hook, with two hundred native levies, was to attack at the gully. Lieutenant Mulenbeck and the Wodehouse Border Guard, with forty Fingoes,

were to begin operations on what was called the Lip. Allan Maclean with his Fingoes was to make a frontal attack at the Spring, while Lieutenant Montagu was to support and follow up Bourne and Springer at the fissure. While the attack was in progress, the artillery for a brief space was to demoralise the enemy by bombarding the citadel.

In case of a repulse, and having to beat a retreat, a species of stone fort was built which would be a rallying point and enable the British to defend themselves. But it was unlikely this would be required. As, however, a rumour had got about that some of the levies—the Tambookies—who had only arrived that evening, might not prove reliable, and even attempt to attack the camp and seize the fort while the troops were engaged, the British were not without a serious handicap. Jack had received permission to accompany the C.M.R. with Lieutenant Springer, the latter having promised to have a special look-out kept for Percy. Sergeant Macnamara was also with the party which was to attempt the scaling of Bourne's Crack, as the fissure was afterwards called.

That forenoon Jack and Sergeant Macnamara had been passing the temporary guard-room when their attention was claimed by a notice on the board on which General Orders were usually posted up. They approached, and perused it.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Macnamara, “ two hundred pounds, bedad, offered for ould Morosi, alive or dead, the same for Dodo, and twenty-five for the first man on top of the Mountain. Shure now, and it’s startin’ a banking account I’ll be.”

“ Well, I hope you’ll have the opportunity, Sergeant,” said Jack. “ You see they take it for granted that Masepuli is dead, and there is nothing for him.”

Macnamara looked thoughtful but made no reply.

There was much writing of letters that day amongst the troops, and it could be seen there were many there who wished that day well over. The Bishop of Bloemfontein and two other clergymen were visiting the camp and chatting in a friendly way amongst the men, some of whom might not be there to see another

sun rise. They were priests indeed—worthy servants of the Church they served.

Jack had a long chat with Mr. Austin, who tried to dissuade him from accompanying the troops that night, but his protest was a half-hearted one. Was it right, after all, to prevent the youth from joining in the attack that was to release that cousin from a captivity which by now must have become unendurable? He himself was going to accompany Allan Maclean and his Fingoes. There was also something else that was troubling him—something that he was almost afraid to think about—might not Morosi, if he saw that his position was hopeless, and that the British must triumph, cause Percy to be put to death in order to spite the enemy? It was by no means an unlikely contingency, to say the least about it. How the hours dragged! The period of inaction or even preparation that precedes a battle is a great deal more momentous and trying than the fight itself. The sound of the first shot or two are particularly disconcerting. When the rattle of musketry rolls along the hillside, and the punctuated hum becomes a rumble and a

roar as of long-drawn-out thunderbolts, then the spirit warms to the work in hand, and one ceases to think of such a thing as danger.

Past midnight now, and the troops are silently falling in at their appointed places. There are few words of command needed. Everything has been arranged beforehand. No hint must be given to the enemy of the intended attack. The C.M.R. with Captain Bourne move off first. The others are not to approach the Rock until the signal to begin the attack comes from him. They carry the scaling ladders with them. They are to be lashed together at the Rock.

“You can keep by me if you like, Jack,” said Lieutenant Springer to the lad. “They say there’s a reward and promotion for the first man on top, but it seems to me a foregone conclusion which lot gets up first. Only the chances are that the first man won’t handle the reward, and he won’t require his promotion.” It was a grim joke, but the gallant Springer could not help smiling when he thought of the contingencies. Somehow as Jack marched on in the darkness beside his friend the Lieutenant,

he thought of that last journey of Wolfe's on to the Heights of Abraham, and the words that the doomed but to be victorious commander is said to have recited to himself and those in the boat, "The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

In order to reach the fissure without being detected by the black sentries on the Rock, they had to make a considerable detour, so that it was nearly two o'clock before they reached it.

"Now, comrades," said Lieutenant Springer, "it is my duty to lead the way. Let's up with the scaling ladders. First we'll lash two together. Three lengths should reach to the first step. Then I'll up and lift them. Twenty of us or so can take shelter on the second step, as I've said."

It was cold, and the men were inclined to shiver in that grey hour that precedes the dawn. Strong and willing hands speedily lashed the ladders together, and within ten minutes a score and more of men were standing on points of vantage on the side of the cliff. The most tricky part of the ascent was still

to come. It was an overhanging rock, and a steep gully above that—negotiable, however, to good climbers—led upwards to the slope above. There was a schanze there, and it was to be hoped the Baphuti sentries would not hear them until they had gained a footing. Jack had been allowed by Springer to take fifth place.

“It’s to be hoped,” said that officer, “that they won’t take alarm. If so, keep close to the rock, so that the stones they are pretty certain to send over pitch clear. If in the gully, hug the sides, so as to give these same stones a free passage.”

Another step or point of vantage was reached, and fresh sections of the scaling-ladder were passed up. There would be no delay and no lack of supports when the last point was reached.

But it was anxious work, and despite the infectious and cheery good spirits of their brave leader, it was not difficult to detect the high nervous tension of those who took part in that dangerous attempt. As for Jack, he prayed that nothing would happen to prematurely

betray their presence to the enemy. In that case, great boulders might be let loose over their heads, and all of them hurled to destruction. Or a volley might be fired and the same end achieved. The success of the attack so much depended on their gaining the plane at that point. Within half-an-hour or so dawn-light would be creeping into the eastern sky. There was no time to lose. The momentous moment had come.

The last reach of ladder was placed against the overhanging rock, and Springer mounted, holding his rifle in one hand. He was just under the top of the Rock when a voice from above challenged him.

“ Stop, or I shoot ! ” challenged the Baphuti.

“ Shoot away ! ” cried Springer.

Next moment the Baphuti fired, and the Lieutenant's cap was shot off his head. It was a close call. But next moment Springer was on top, and holding out his rifle in front of him as if it were a revolver, he shot the native who had tried to shoot him, through the head.

Next moment the men were crowding up at Springer's heels.

“Let them have it, boys! Shoot straight, and don’t waste a shot. Hooray!”

They fired together like one man, and rushed up the steep gully. Jack found himself close to his leader, negotiating that steep bank of sand and rocks in a truly wonderful fashion. The excitement of the moment lent them almost superhuman strength and skill. The men crowded up. Another minute and they were behind the first schanze, engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with the Baphutis who manned it. But the latter had been taken by surprise, and before they could grasp the fact that the British had actually somehow contrived to scale that supposedly inaccessible Rock, they were either shot down or in full flight.

And now high in the heavens over the great fortress the star-shells burst, lighting up the face of it as with the light of the sun. From far and near came the hoarse cheers of the attacking forces, until the deafening roar of the big guns, and the crackle of musketry, silenced the human voices.

And now the Baphutis had rallied at the topmost and inner schanzes, and were making a

stand against the attackers, who were sweeping on like the resistless force they were, shooting and bayoneting the sorely astonished defender in the schanzes and trenches.

By this time Allan Maclean at the head of his devoted Fingoes had reached the top of the gully which had been his objective, and in a few minutes more would join forces with the C.M.R. The young leader seemed to have a charmed life. Bare-headed and shouting cheerily to his men, he swept the wondering Baphutis in front of him. Captain Mulenbeck sword in hand and at the head of his men, was charging the front schanzes. The Baphutis in them had no time to flee. Where they fell there they lay. Only the faint-hearted Tambookies had refused to proceed, and Captain Hook marched them back to camp, where they were made prisoners by the artillerymen who had ceased firing.

And now "the dawn came up like thunder," as if to reveal the last act in the lurid drama of the taking of Morosi's Rock.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON TOP OF THE ROCK

THE Cape Mounted Rifles were now on the level of the great Rock. "Fix bayonets, men, and let them have it," cried Springer. There was an ominous tinkle and a glitter of cold steel. "Now for all you are worth, boys, charge!"

The Baphutis fled before that merciless rush, but some there were who did not flee fast enough. Previous to this Springer had given permission to Jack to go in search of Percy.

"But look out for yourself," that gallant soldier had said. "You see the bulk of the Baphutis are making a last stand in those centre schanzes. Keep a wary eye for stragglers amongst the rocks."

But one place seemed to be just as safe as another in that bullet-swept plateau. Some of the besiegers had retired to the shelter of huts and inner schanzes, while others again had

taken refuge in the little caves that honey-combed the sides of the central ridge. From these they fired indiscriminately at any one who approached. One never knew from what point the deadly bullet might come. The fight was going on fiercely in several quarters, but it was obvious that the Rock was won. It was an ill-advised and foolish resistance now.

In a hut about a couple of hundred yards from where the nearest fighting was going on, a white boy in shabby, worn-out clothes was trying to force a door so as to get out and join those whom he knew had come to rescue him, and settle accounts once and for all with the rebel chief and those high-handed and dangerous spirits, his sons. Needless to say it was Percy, who for long weary months had been kept a prisoner. He had been rudely awakened by the furious din of rifle and gun fire to find that his guard had fled, and locked him in. But the door and lock were stout and defied his efforts. Suddenly the key that had been left on the outside turned. The door was opened quickly, and the lad saw a black man, rifle in hand, standing in front of him against the

grey dawn. In a moment he knew it was Dodo. In one hand the black man held a stabbing assegai. Percy darted back into the shadow.

“Come out, you young cub, and pay the penalty,” cried Dodo. “You would have been dead long ago if my counsel had only prevailed, but you are not going to escape me now. Come out! If I have to enter and fetch you, your death will be the more terrible.”

The black man stood right in the doorway peering into the gloom of the hut. His right hand held the assegai, his left rested on the door-post.

“Come on then, and fetch me!” cried Percy, and next moment a rude native-made stool crashed into Dodo’s face, dashing the assegai from his hand and sending him spinning backwards. Before he could recover himself, Percy had sprung at and struck him a violent blow on the side of the head that brought him to earth. But a Basuto is not so easily vanquished. In another moment, with a cry of rage that resembled the snarl of a wild animal at bay, he had sprung in upon and closed with the youth.

"You cub!" he managed to cry, "I'll throw you over the cliff."

That he would have accomplished his threat there can be little doubt, but at that moment there was a distraction. The clatter of hurrying feet was heard in a temporary lull of the firing. Dodo made frantic endeavours to force his victim over the edge of the precipice, but in doing so his right foot turned on a loose stone. To save himself he released his grip on Percy. Next moment a bare-headed young officer, followed by a company of armed black men, had arrived upon the scene. It was Allan Maclean and some of his Fingoes.

"Don't shoot, men, we must take him alive—Dodo, you are our prisoner," cried the young officer, and signed to his men to close in upon them.

But Dodo had no intention of being taken alive. Quick as thought he made a grab at Percy, caught him by the coat collar, and next moment was pushing him towards the brink beyond which yawned sickening space. "We'll go over together!" he cried.

But Dodo reckoned without his host. Allan



DODO ENDEAVOURED TO FORCE HIS VICTIM OVER THE PRECIPICE

Maclean with his left hand managed to catch hold of Percy, and pulled him back. "Not just yet," he cried, and with his right drew his revolver from its pouch, and levelled it at the black man's head.

"Not just yet!" mocked Dodo, and wheeling dived headlong from that giddy height. At the same moment, Maclean fired, but with what result will never be known. Dodo's body was not found amongst the many who also dived from that terrible height into the Orange River. It has been said that some of the Baphutis actually survived that terrible leap, but with what truth it is hard to say.

And this was the last that was seen or heard of Dodo, son of Morosi.

It was then that Allan Maclean turned to the now shabbily clad and hatless youth who stood alongside. He was about to address him when some one came running up. It was Jack.

"Percy," he cried. "I've been looking for you everywhere. O Percy!"

And that was all that was said just then, for there are times and occasions all too full for

words. They went off together to find Mr Austin.

In another part of that weird mountain-top an equally stirring scene was in progress. Sergeant Macnamara had got permission from his superior officer to go off on his own to look for Percy, or to discover the whereabouts of Morosi and his sons. He had a shrewd suspicion that the leaders of the rebellion, seeing the day was lost, would endeavour to hide somewhere in the broken ground at the far end of the plateau, nor was he wrong. He was groping amongst the rocks in a break of the cliff, when suddenly on a little platform, just round a shoulder of rock, he espied a black man. The latter, with that cunning which primitive types have doubtless copied from the animal and insect life around them, and which, after all, is only the protective instinct, had flattened himself against a rock almost as dark as his own skin, and but for the fact that the white of the hider's eye caught the glance of the Irishman, it is not unlikely he might have been passed unnoticed. A parallel instance of such a case is the way by which a hare is detected in the bracken or

stubble, similar in colour to its own coat. It is its large lustrous eyes that give it away—a strange instance of a still incomplete evolution.

“Come out o’ that or I’ll shoot ye,” cried Macnamara, and hastened to cover his man with his rifle. The moment he did so the horrible truth flashed upon him that he had actually forgotten to reload. He had fired at a Baphuti who had tried his level best to kill him just a few minutes before, and in the jubilation following upon a successful shot, he had neglected to put in a fresh cartridge. Still, he realised the necessity of bluff.

Next moment the black man sprang up, and faced him. There was the lower part of the shoulder of rock between them, so the Irishman could only see the upper part of the black man’s body. The latter’s hands were hidden, so Macnamara was in the dark as to whether or not they held a weapon. But the most startling feature of the situation was that in the surprised black man the Irishman recognised his old enemy, Masepuli—the man whom he believed had perished when he had caught him napping, and toppled him over the cliff.

For the moment Macnamara was so astounded that he was incapable of thought or action. A species of superstitious dread seized on him. Was this Masepuli in the flesh or his ghost? Macnamara was by no means a disbeliever in the spirit world. He was quite open to conviction that the black man he beheld was not really a creature of flesh and blood at all, but a semblance of that which he had once been. He would put the matter to the test.

“Come along wid ye, Masepuli,” he cried, with a wonderful show of being perfectly at his ease. “There’s twenty-five quid offered for ye dead or alive, an’ it’s a banking account I’m going to start.”

“And so it is you, baboon face!” said Masepuli, as he gazed fixedly at the man who at their last meeting had succeeded in turning the tables upon him. “Yes, my luck was out that last time, wasn’t it? But all the same, if you had only descended that kloof you might easily have taken me prisoner or killed me. I wasn’t fit for much for several minutes after that tumble. But I managed to struggle ashore, and rest for a space.”

“An’ shure, I always said as how the head av ye was like a block of wood, Masepuli,” observed the Irishman. “But it’s wastin’ time ye are talkin’! You’re my prisoner. Come over here!”

“Another time will do, O baboon face!” replied the black man. “If you want me you’ve got to come and fetch me.”

“I’ll fetch ye one in the eye directly, imajit,” was the angry rejoinder. “It’s me as is ordering ye.”

“And it’s me that is refusing to obey,” was the equally determined observation. “Did you say, O ugly one, that you were thinking of starting what you called a banking account?”

“Yes, with that twenty-five quid I’m going to get for you, Masepuli. Come on, now—no shinanikin!”

“Then take that on account, O cross-eyed one!” and with a lightning-like quickness the black man’s right hand shot up, and a piece of quartz about the size of a cricket ball whizzed through the air. It just missed the Irishman’s head by the fraction of an inch, and shivered into little bits on a rock alongside him.

“Aw, the murtherin’ sowl of ye!” cried Macnamara. “It’s mince-meat I’ll be makin’ of ye, shure!”

He clubbed his rifle and made for Masepuli, whom he suspected was in the act of looking for another piece of rock. He quite forgot that by doing this he was intimating to his enemy that his rifle was unloaded. And Masepuli did not fail to take full advantage of the hint. He himself had lost his rifle when he was driven from the hut where he had been surprised. He sprang over the shoulder of rock, and rushed full tilt at Macnamara. It was the rush of a wild animal from its lair when it realises it is the only thing left to do.

But the Irishman was ready for him. Crash! and he brought his clubbed rifle down on the black man’s head. So terrible was the force of the blow that the stock of the rifle itself was broken.

And where Masepuli fell, there he lay.

“I’m sorry in a way, for ye put up a rale good fight,” said the Irishman. “At the same time, it was you or me for it. I don’t think I’ll be wanting that twenty-five quid now.”

As he clambered up to the plateau again a shot whizzed past his head. He turned just in time to catch sight of a gun barrel being withdrawn from the mouth of the cave in the face of the ridge. Macnamara knew that some black fugitive had been having a pot shot at him. He picked up a Snider rifle that some one had dropped or flung away, and seeing that there was a cartridge still in the breech, approached the cave from which the shot had come. He did not go right up to it, but first made the side of the ridge, then travelled along it.

When the black man popped his head out to see what had happened to the soldier whom he had fired at, he made a fatal mistake. There was a blinding flash close to him, and he fell dead with a bullet through his brain. But the same moment a man called Whitehead, a member of the Wodehouse Border Guard, fired from the opposite ridge, and the honours were divided. Macnamara all the same was enabled to start his banking account.

So died Morosi, the instigator of all the trouble. In order to give himself an oppor-

tunity of exercising his love for war, he had repaid with gross ingratitude and treachery those who had, indeed, been his best friends. While still enjoying the protection and friendship of those who had striven honestly to advance his interests, and those of his people, he had been all the time preparing his famous stronghold for a prolonged siege in the event of the British not quietly walking out of his country, as he had seen them do in a neighbouring state under somewhat similar circumstances.

Half-an-hour later and the last rebel had been routed from his hiding-place, and the Union Jack was flying over the great Rock. Lieutenant Springer, who was the first man on top of the Mountain, received his promotion on the spot.

Unknown for a time to those in command of the British, Morosi's head looked down from the top of a pole close to the schanzes. It was the same pole on which the heads of those unfortunate Englishmen who had fallen hard by had been stuck at the beginning of the siege. It was a grim lesson to the remnant

of Morosi's army that filed past it on their way to the flat below.

It was a memorable meeting between Mr. Austin and his two nephews. Needless to say, they had every reason to thank Providence for the way in which they had been safeguarded through a particularly perilous and anxious time. And like truly brave men, they did not forget to recognise that Higher Power.

When, a little later, the three walked together over Morosi's Rock for the last time, they witnessed a memorable scene. As a troop of C.M.R. was to remain behind in occupation, hundreds of willing workers were now busy demolishing the schanzes on the slope, and clearing up the level on top of the Rock. First of all, Morosi's powder-magazine containing several barrels of gunpowder was blown up. The many dead scattered about everywhere were removed and buried. Hundreds of carcasses of live stock that had been killed by flying pieces of shell, were removed. The vultures, those thorough scavengers of the air—were busy for days afterwards disposing of them. In the granaries were found large

quantities of mealies and other necessities of life, demonstrating that Morosi had taken good care to prepare for a long siege if necessary. Moreover, as had been suspected, and as afterwards transpired, the besieged ones had kept up regular communication with certain other tribes in the neighbourhood. They had also by means of long ropes contrived to hoist regular supplies of certain commodities on to the Rock without any particular difficulty. It had been impossible to prevent this in the winter months when the garrison of the besiegers had been considerably reduced. It had then to concentrate lest a sortie would be made by Morosi's people, in which case a scattered force would have come badly off at the hands of the enemy. Indeed, as Percy explained, Morosi had all the time been watching for such a chance. Fortunately, it never came.

Babawane and 'Mlimi had been wounded and made prisoners in the final attack, and as these two warriors had undoubtedly treated Percy with a certain amount of consideration, and probably even prevented Dodo and Masepuli from venting any personal spite upon him,

Mr. Austin and Jack went to Colonel Bayley and succeeded in getting them specially seen to, and their speedy release assured. Indeed, Percy and Jack went at once to the temporary hospital to see them, and took them such comforts as they thought would prove acceptable. The other prisoners and the wounded received the utmost care and attention at the hands of the British. Needless to say, such kindly and thoughtful acts when known went far to remove any bitterness between the misguided Baphutis and the whites. To-day there is no more prosperous and friendly people living under the British flag than these same Basutos.

In proof of it, when nineteen years afterwards the writer of this story, as one of Brabant's Horse, along with the Cape Mounted Rifles and other regiments of the South African Field Force, was besieged at Wepener during the Boer war by an infinitely larger army within full view of these same Basutoland mountains, it was Lerothodi the Basuto chief and his friendly followers who, before the actual investment took place, came to the British lines and offered their help so as to avert

the threatened catastrophe. Needless to say, the British could not accept that generously proffered aid. But the world knows how the South African Field Force emerged from the terrible ordeal triumphantly. On the first day of that fateful fight close to Jammersberg Drift, and with the Basutos looking on, the writer fought alongside the gallant Major Springer, who was the first man on top of Morosi's Rock. So in real life things sometimes come about even more strangely than they do in fiction.

THE END

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